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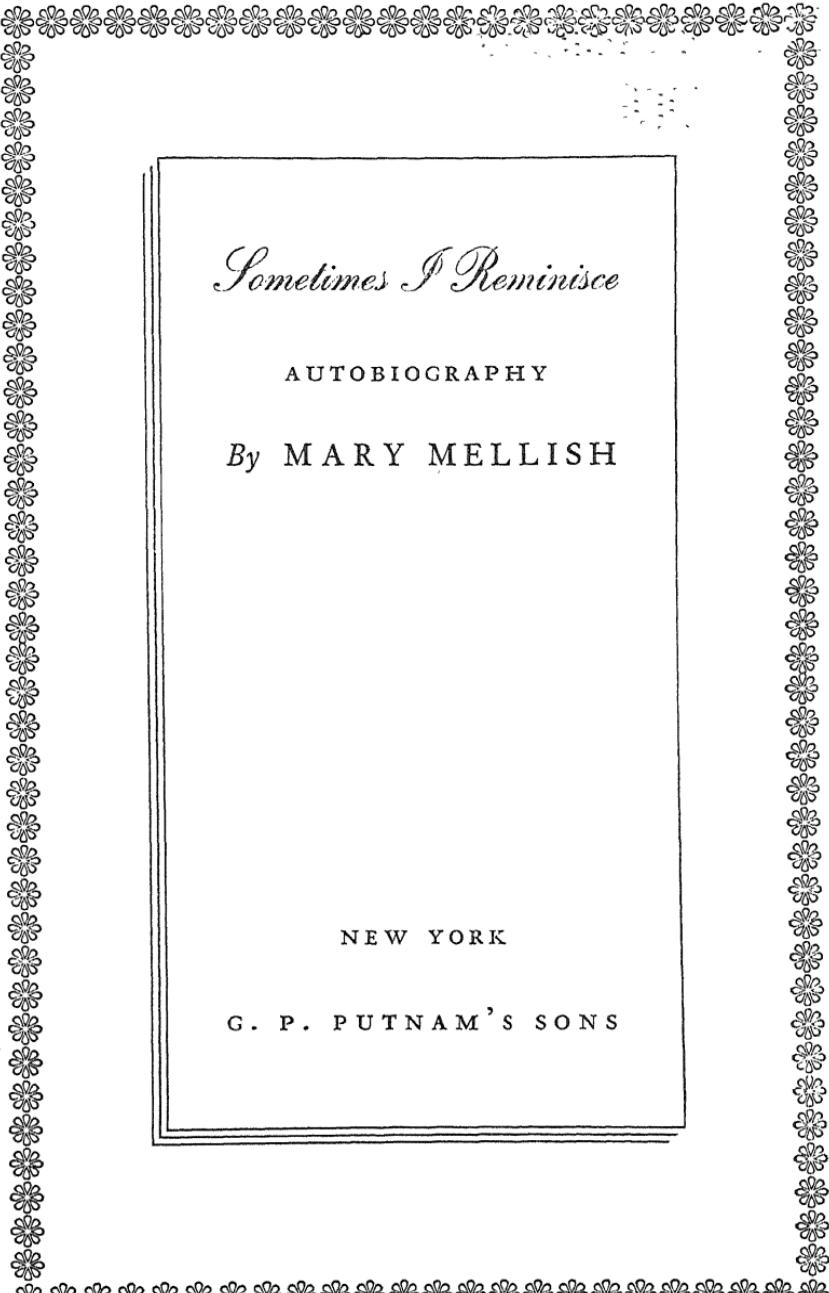






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MARY MELLISH



*Sometimes I Reminisce*

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

By MARY MELLISH

NEW YORK

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TO MY PARENTS  
IN LOVING MEMORY

5

1900



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## *ACKNOWLEDGMENT*

For many years I have indulged the thought that some day I would write a book. But I procrastinated and silenced the urge within me. Finally a friend, Dorothy Barko, insisted that I record my story.

"Sometimes I Reminisce" is the result.

For the interest Miss Barko has shown and the encouragement she has given me, I wish to express my deep appreciation.

M. M.

## *Part One*



## I

### *BEGINNINGS—MUSICAL AND OTHERWISE*

ON MORE than one occasion I have been asked just what was my musical background and I still wonder if I had any, other than that which I made myself.

My mother knew nothing of music and loved it in all its simple forms. My father played the jew's-harp, if you call that a musical instrument. He played the piano a little, and the accordion extremely well, and of course he never had a lesson.

My grandfather, who was too lazy to work, would sit for hours at a time and sing Thomas Moore's Irish melodies. Grandfather had the asthma, but his choking and gasping for breath never bothered me. I would curl up at his feet and beg for one more song. Two of my favorites were "The Kerry Dance," and "Then You'll Remember Me," from the Bohemian Girl. Little did I know as I sat there entranced, that I should later use both of these songs on concert programs!

Father, a very handsome man, was born in Ireland. Mother, a tiny mite and quite pretty, was born of Irish parents, in a sweet country village outside of Albany, New York. My parents, grandparents, sisters, brothers and now the young generation are more Spanish in coloring. I have long suspected that some young gallants from the Spanish Armada made successful conquests among my Irish ancestors.

I think that I went to school at the age of six at St. John's Academy. There was no kindergarten, no gentle approach to knowledge. You just found yourself sitting on a hard bench saying

the a b c's, and singing the multiplication tables while the good nun wrote letters to her friends. Each lesson period was followed by prayers, some of them long and arduous, but I very early chose my pet Saints and I must say they have never let me down. St. Ann, to whom we prayed for fair weather on our little outings and picnics, had no appeal for me. There was a picture of her in our classroom and to me she was just a dowdy old lady, even if she was the Blessed Virgin's Mother. I loved St. Cecilia playing the organ and lovely St. Ursula, the martyr, whose name I later chose at confirmation.

The good sisters at St. John's, and I loved them all, taught us early and often to hold our bodies sacred and pure. And the virtue of modesty was extolled to a high degree. Sister Eugenia, the Mother Superior told us in one of her morning talks that we must even guard our thoughts in bathing and not wash too long in any one place. Although I did not understand just the why and wherefore of that suggestion, I was entirely religious, I thought, so I proceeded to do as I was told. As a result, I remember very distinctly taking my bath with great care. I sang some hymns; I was always singing in any case. I also prayed to St. Joseph, for he was the Lily of Purity. I asked him to keep my mind on a spiritual plane and always to help me in acquiring the virtue of modesty.

Music lessons on the piano began at the age of eight. Sister Eugenia, a magnificent musician, did not take beginners, so I was placed with her assistant, a lay person, sweet and sympathetic. My mother was charged the sum of twenty-five cents a lesson. I was with this teacher for about six months and was in high glee when she said that she believed I had a definite talent and must be placed with Sister Eugenia.

My father had by this time bought me my first piano, a huge square affair, made of rosewood and trimmed in mother-of-pearl. I was crazy with joy in its ownership and now I know that it must

have sounded like a defunct music box. Father told me he had paid thirty dollars for it, at an auction sale. It was so big that I remember I used to play gypsy under it, on rainy days. I was the gypsy with a tambourine and my long-suffering mother and the two younger children would endure my outbursts of song. My repertoire then included some snatches of popular songs which I had heard, a few hymns and the "Tantum Ergo" in Latin.

Grandmother used to take me to the Vesper service on Sunday afternoons and I had memorized much of the Latin. I would coax grandmother to take me and the family was pleased that I had shown spiritual tendencies so early. I loved the lights, music, and incense. It was the theater in me finding its first outlet.

My piano music had now begun to take real form. I had gotten beyond the "Maiden's Prayer" and other deadly numbers, and was playing a few simple studies of Bach and some little gems of Mozart.

My first public appearance was at the age of ten. Sister Eugenia was proud of my piano progress and as a reward I was to be taken to St. John's Catholic Church to play on the big organ. I was so small that I was lifted to the seat and could not reach the pedals, so the good Sister sat on the bench beside me and used the pedals for me. My parents vacated their pew in the church that Sunday, and sat in the gallery from whence they might see me.

I played several hymns for the choir and at the Offertory I rendered, as they say "Hearts and Flowers," with soft pedals and several intricate and appropriate stops controlled by Sister Eugenia. I was terribly intrigued with the organ. It gave me a sense of power and importance and I longed again to get my fingers on its fascinating keyboard. I schemed and planned but to no avail. One memorable day the way was opened to me.

My dearest friend and school chum was Marie. We were inseparable and together responsible for all the fun and devilment in our rather dull classroom. One day, Marie and I were sent on an errand to the parish house of St. John's Church.

The priest was not at home that day and the old servant took the box and disappeared to her ale and porter,—she was well known for that weakness.

I urged and begged Marie to slip through the sacristy door into the big church, so I might play that grand organ. With fear and terror we tip-toed our way to the organ loft. I was now a year older, taller, and could climb on the bench. Poor little Marie was elected to pump the organ by hand. I sat there listening to her frantic efforts and finally the air flowed under the keys and I caressed them lovingly. Suddenly I began to play a ribald tune, popular at that time but entirely out of place in that or any church. If a passer-by had ever heard that so-called music, we would have indeed been doomed. But I had not played many bars when the air began to leave the organ and I heard a scream from Marie. I ran back and found the poor girl hanging in mid-air. The handle on the organ pump had gone up carrying her with it and refused to come down! There was nothing to do but jump, which I hurriedly advised and tremblingly we found ourselves out on the street again vowing eternal secrecy.

Marie will appear again. She was always at the crossroads with me, sympathetic and understanding. And when my musical activities took me to higher places, her pride in me knew no bounds.

At the age of eleven my piano lessons were stopped and for a good reason. Sister Eugenia wrote a note to mother saying that it was a waste of good money to allow me to continue my lessons—I refused to practice, was playing trash and playing entirely by ear. This was ruinous to real music she avowed but she suggested that later on I might take vocal lessons as I was leading the choir in Chapel, had a sweet voice, and could sing on key.

I was delighted to be rid of the horrible grind of practice, it fitted in with my plans for ice-skating and bob-sledding in the winter and left me free to rhapsodize at will on my new piano—our old one

had been turned in and we owned a lovely upright. I could sing and play my own accompaniments, and was doing well in my studies. I adored my teacher, Sister Baptista, and was her pet I am sure. When she smiled at me my day was made and if she patted my cheek in passing, I shivered with joy.

The dear old priest who came to teach the advanced Latin was another well loved personality. He later wrote a beautiful book on Dante and one of my treasures is an autographed copy sent to me, when, as a member of the Metropolitan Opera Company, I sang a benefit concert for his church.

For play hours I had made a nun's habit and a kind of linen corset, as the headdress was called and a white linen collar. I played that I was Sister Eugenia and my classmates said that I did a fine job in imitating her superior manner and austere dignity. Of course this was again theater, not the vocational call of which I had almost convinced myself.

For several summers there came to the old Leland Opera House in Albany, a company of singers who called themselves The Wilbur Opera Company. The price of admission to the performances was ten, twenty and thirty cents. My dear mother announced one Saturday morning that she would like me to hear *The Chimes of Normandy*. My mother wore a black taffeta dress, and I helped her tie on a small bustle. For jewelry, she wore a gold necklace with a gold and coral cross and long coral earrings which my father had given her. Other than a small pair of diamond earrings, it was the only jewelry I have ever known her to have.

My best dress was an olive green heavy silk, made over from one of my mother's dresses. I was very proud of the dress but now I know that olive green on my mother, who had brilliant coloring, and olive green on me with my sallow skin, was quite another picture.

We had seats down front. I was later to become acquainted with

balconies, galleries and standing room! I suppose there may have been ten pieces in the orchestra but to little me who had never heard any ensemble playing, it sounded like the New York Philharmonic. I still remember it as my first big thrill and before the performance was over, I had the exquisite feeling of swooning. I left that theater in a daze and there too, I left any thought of the convent as a vocation.

I consecrated myself to the theater and dreamed of the day when I should be on the other side of the footlights, with admiring friends sending forth frantic applause.

All that summer, mother and I made frequent trips to the Leland Opera House. I heard *Pinafore*, *Olivette*, *Poet and Peasant*, *Boccaccio*, and many others. The leading woman in *Boccaccio* was a huge sensual animal, with a warm lovely voice. She wore red tights. I was terribly skinny at the time and secretly prayed and hoped that some day I could boast of a beautiful fat pair of thighs, such as she had. That wish has nearly been accomplished many times, but my ideas of beauty being now along different lines, I adhere to my diet and immediately betake me to Elizabeth Arden.

The play hours now change and it is always theater. To add to the glamour, our class in English literature had been taken to hear the great Modjeska in *Macbeth*. She played only one night in Albany. Her sleep-walking scene was unforgettable and it seems that I can still hear her striking delivery of the immortal lines

"Here's the smell of blood still;  
all the perfumes of Arabia will  
not sweeten this little hand."

My own audience now numbered five, three younger sisters and two younger brothers. Their reward for listening to my ravings was a promise of a pan of fudge or molasses taffy, and I always paid the next night.

We had a three-story-and-basement house, with the children's rooms on the top floor. The younger ones were sent to bed early and after our studies my sister Nan and I were to follow along. If I was to perform that night, I gave them a previous signal and the poor dears would try to stay awake. If they had fallen asleep, which was often the case, I awakened them and they sat in bed or on the floor while the show went on.

In costume I did *Pinafore*, choosing "I'm called Little Buttercup." Draped in a sheet, I gave Lady Macbeth and one of my younger brothers usually cried with fright—he has often reminded me of those happy times. A third favorite act was to wear a picture hat belonging to my mother and play Lillian Russell—I had seen her pictures on my father's box of cigars. Not knowing her repertoire I sang "Then You'll Remember Me."

My mother was too tired to give much thought to the top floor. So long as we were quiet, she thought all was well and besides, she usually was caring for a new baby. There were ten of us, eventually, and seven are living.

Once when I told Sister Vincent that my mother had a new baby boy, she said to tell my mother that she would have another star in her crown, in heaven. Mother was terribly pleased and called the baby Joseph Vincent. I hope Sister Vincent was right because my blessed mother deserved a crown and a red plush seat among the angels. Her whole life was one of sacrifice and devotion to her family.

Our summers were spent at home. I used to wonder how it felt to be rich and go to Asbury Park! And in summertime I gave my theatrical outbursts in our good-sized back yard. I invited our neighbors' children and pressed Nan into playing second parts, whether they were male, female or children's parts. Nan hated to act, but I dominated her completely and it was easier to play with me than to quarrel. When I had given the same banal performance

three Saturdays in succession, when the applause, which I signaled for, refused to come forth, and when the restless audience began to leave, I schemed and with good results. I served lemonade, ginger snaps and small pieces of Baker's chocolate, stolen from the pantry shelf.

We never knew poverty nor affluence. We were just a cozy middle-class family jogging along as best we could. September in our house meant getting our clothes ready for school, with always the budget in view—my mother keeping her old dress and hat so that my expensive book bills could be met. We paid for school books in those days.

October was pickling and preserving time and I still can smell the chili sauce, catsup, chow-chow and many other delightful condiments which now are usually bought at the delicatessen shop. Of course there was always home-made bread and on Saturday afternoon when I came home from ice skating, I would dash for a piece of that sweet smelling bread and spread it with chili sauce. I am beginning to drool at the mouth as I think of it. You see, at this stage my palate required only very simple food. The daily desserts with which I was familiar were pies, layer cakes, bread and rice puddings, and on occasions, ice cream, then selling for thirty cents a quart. In days to come, when I had been introduced to champagne, caviar, Crêpes Suzettes, rognons aux Madeira and other epicurean necessities, I found that my palate still craved homely food. A plain chicken fricassee and an old-fashioned kidney stew have left a permanent appeal.

In my country house, October always finds us treading in the old ways and my pantry shelves are not found wanting.

My father was rather stoical in make-up and very provident. Just so much money had to go to the bank each month, regardless of any extravagant plans.

Mother, who was gay with a repressed flair for the romantic,

would manage our Christmas holidays and what pleasant memories she has left us. Christmas preparations began about two weeks in advance. Grandmother would come to help and with old Mrs. Carlin, our only servant, the kitchen took on the airs of a bake-shop. Mrs. Carlin, who was with us for years, did all the work for twenty-five dollars a month. There was fruit cake, coffee cake, mince meat (all made with brandy), small animal cookies and New Year's cookies with caraway seeds.

Then came the shopping for toys and trimmings for the Christmas tree. Mother and I planned and shopped for the presents and I never remember a Christmas without buying a drum, fish pond, lotto and tiddle-de-winks. One Christmas I had to do all the errands. Mother had had a baby in late November and was too delicate to brave the severe December weather. On Christmas Eve we hung the stockings and set the tree in the back parlor and went to bed tired and happy. We were amply repaid for our labors in the joyous screams of the children as they romped downstairs screaming "Santa Claus is here!"

Christmas dinner was never varied, turkey with plain or sausage meat dressing, mashed potatoes, creamed white onions, giblet gravy, cranberry sauce and celery. The dessert was mince pie and plum pudding with brandy—no hard sauce. There was no telephoning to Longchamps for the pie or ordering the pudding from Charles. Everything came from the kitchen. My father insisted on pouring each child a glass of port wine, and how good it was! The old decanter with the little glasses around it gave the table a holiday gaiety. I still have the decanter but my taste in alcohol has gone far beyond port wine. As for my capacity in consuming it, I prefer not to go into detail at this point.

Our dinner hour was about one-thirty and we staggered away to play until supper at six. Supper was the remains of our noble bird, as my father called it, home-made bread, preserved peaches or pears

from our own pantry and fruit cake or cookies as we preferred.

In the evening we gathered in the front parlor, father in his arm chair and mother in her favorite rocker, sometimes the baby in her lap. I played the accompaniments and my three sisters Lil, Nan and Madge sang the Christmas carols and quartettes. The girls all had good voices and could harmonize—our quartette numbers, all requests from mother and father, were "Loch Lomond," "Sweet and Low," "Just a Song at Twilight," "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean" and several others in that same category. The Christmas Carols were always, "Holy Night," "The Snow Lay on the Ground," "Come All Ye Faithful," and "The Little Town of Bethlehem." And Christmas night closed in upon a peaceful happy family.

My maternal grandmother, a tall handsome woman, had a beautiful figure, the real hour-glass. She was vain and fussy about her limited wardrobe. For everyday she wore what was called a wrapper, made of gingham, calico, percale or some such material.

The waist seemed to have a dozen seams in it and the skirts were circular and full. Grandmother made them herself but always brought the new dress down to our house, where my mother had to give her the final fitting.

When mother would see her coming down the street with the bundle of sewing she would lose patience and say to me, "Now here comes your grandmother again, I suppose she has found a wrinkle in that dress. I fitted it for her, but she is so vain, it has to set on her, just so! It is only wash material, but you would think it was satin." And then grandmother would try on the wrapper, mother would stop her work and together they would repair to our back parlor, where there was a long mirror, in a carved walnut frame. Seams were ripped, pinned, basted, the dress tried on again and again and when grandmother was satisfied and had departed

mother wearily said—"That's the last time I'll go through with this, if I have to pay a dressmaker"—but it went on year in and year out.

However, when grandmother did appear in that dress, with white lace collars and cuffs and the little brooch at her neck, I thought she was elegant. Her luxuriant white hair was piled high and she carried herself like Queen Mary.

I had heard so much talk about "wakes" and the fun thereat, that I coaxed and begged to go to a wake. Now an Irish wake is an institution and I cannot say whether the idea is no longer *à la mode* or if I am removed from the general locale of wakes—I never hear of them.

Be that as it may, a wake is a gathering of relatives and friends, who come as mourners to the house of the deceased. Sometimes strangers crashed the wake, in quest of food and liquor, for such refreshments were amply provided in earlier days. The womenfolk sat in the front parlor, where the body of the corpse reposed, while the menfolks repaired to the back parlor and kitchen to condone, reminisce and imbibe.

When I was about ten years old my grandmother's cousin died. Grandmother said I could go with her on the night that the body was laid out. Together we went to the house, and gazed upon the body of my grandcousin. He was to me an austere and cantankerous old bird, and his passing on meant nothing,—I was there for excitement. The women in the front parlor spoke in whispers, decorum reigned and I began to fidget. I could hear laughter and rollicking gaiety in the back rooms, and I made an excuse to talk to my grandfather. I could distinguish his infectious laughter and wherever liquor was flowing, there he could always be found on location. I worked my way into the back parlor and while I was there for perhaps only ten minutes, I had a definite impression about wakes.

The room was filled with smoke, mostly from pipes. About eight or ten men were comfortably seated and most of them were drinking Irish whiskey. I have for some strange reason, missed that brand of alcohol, but my own father always had some for holiday time. He said that it made you feel frisky, like a squirrel, and you wanted to climb trees.

These jolly mourners were laughing and telling jokes, with now and then an interruption to mention some splendid characteristics of the deceased. My grandfather was acting as waiter and chief guzzler. The corpse being a relative, I suppose he had his privileges.

An old codger named Jim Donnelly seemed to be the end-man in the show. I remember him well for I hated him. He teased me whenever I met him at my grandfather's house. He said once that I was built like a greyhound, long and lean, and I never forgave him for it. Donnelly was a known wit and at each lull in the conversation he would cross to the table, replenish his liquor and begin "Do you remember the time," and then would follow some anecdote which provoked hilarious laughter. Sandwiches were being prepared in the kitchen, for those lusty mourners who might remain through the night.

On the way home I told my grandmother that it was sad to have Cousin Frank's body in the casket, while his good friends were having such a fine party. I thought that the party should have been given before he died. Grandmother corrected me and rather sharply, it was not a party, and must not be called one. It was a friendly gathering, just an Irish wake!

Early in my life, I had a reaction to people's speaking voices and in play hours, when I was being an actress, I gave imitations of one nun, a brilliant teacher of the upper classes, who had a voice like vinegar, then of the Mother Superior, whose voice carried with

it a cold, frozen dignity and last of Sister Baptista, my idol. Her voice sounded to me like soft organ music and I dreamed of being in her class, to see and hear her every day.

When I was about twelve years old, I reached Sister Baptista's class, and one day, in an afternoon literature lesson, Sister announced that we would read and study a poem called "Evangeline" by Henry W. Longfellow.

With folded hands, and in silence we sat, as this beautifully modulated voice read,

"This is the forest primeval..."

"Can any girl in this class tell me what is a primeval forest?" asked Sister.

There was no answer, for we were all city children and our knowledge of forests had only to do with the childish stories in "Grimm's Fairy Tales." I had seen some elm trees which stood not far from our house, and there were nice tall trees in St. Agnes' Cemetery, where grandmother often took me for Sunday walks. The word primeval, was new to all of us.

So we waited, and the good Sister proceeded to paint an entrancing word picture of a primeval forest. She said it was a virgin forest, never disturbed by man. There were hundreds and hundreds of tall trees and young trees and bushes which were called underbrush. It was cool and dark in a forest, and the air was fragrant and pure. By day, one could hear wild birds singing and at night the animals prowled about. Any forest was beautiful, but primeval was the word we must remember, almost indescribable in its unspoiled loveliness. Then she went on to read the lines

"The murmuring pines and the hemlocks,  
Bearded with moss, and in garments green, indistinct in the twilight,  
Stand like Druids of eld, with voices sad and prophetic,  
Stand like harpers' hoar, with beards that rest on their bosoms."

And closing the book, Sister explained to us about pine trees. There were so many of them, cedars, firs, balsam, spruce and hemlocks, all different in size, foliage and fragrance. Some of the trees in a forest were small and the wind died early in their branches. But the slightest wind played in the tall pines and they were always murmuring. And then there came a descriptive narrative in which Sister told us about the Druid priest, who practiced his pagan rites in a forest. He was tall and had a beard. The pine trees, with old vines clinging to them, reminded Longfellow of these Druids. Only four lines of the poem had been read that day, and the twenty minute lesson had been given over to the study of these lines. But the word picture had been so completely captivating that I could scarcely wait for the next day's lesson.

Day by day the sweet story of Evangeline unfolded, and each day brought renewed interest and an abiding love for Evangeline, Longfellow and poetry.

I was living in the story and when I learned that the general locale of the scene was a place called Arcadia, I thought a lot about it. One day after school, I lingered on a slight pretext and told Sister Baptista how much I was loving Evangeline and I declared that some day I was going to Arcadia. She smiled at me, rather strangely I thought, and I said to her, "Sister, were you ever in Arcadia?" She looked away for a moment and stared into space. Then taking my face between her hands, she kissed me lightly on the cheek. "Yes, dear, I was," she said, "some day you will go there too." "Where is it," I asked? And then with moist eyes she said to me, "It can be anywhere, but it must be first in your heart. Now run along, for I have work to do." I departed, not satisfied with her explanation, but feeling that she had once visited Arcadia and had had some unpleasant memory which she did not like to talk about.

Later, in this same delightful way, and under the spell of her lovely voice, we studied "Thanatopsis," "Death of the Flowers,"

"Grays' Elegy," "The Builders," "Crossing the Bar," and many other gems of literature. And thirty years later, when Rosa Pon-selle and Marion Telva gave an unforgettable performance of *Norma*, the curtain at the Metropolitan Opera rose upon a scene of the Druid Forest.

Sister Baptista had long since gone to her Arcadia, but I heard her beautiful voice saying,

"This is the forest primeval."

It was in Sister Baptista's class that I experienced my first deep humiliation. It took on the proportions of a catastrophe and left an imprint on memory's page, which time can never efface.

One of my classmates had imparted to my eager ears, a vulgar poem which rhymed, but had no reason. I thought it terribly funny, memorized it and held it in reserve, for some dull moment in the classroom.

One day, the deadly grammar lesson was in full swing and we were parsing sentences. The word parse brought to mind the so-called poem and I felt myself called upon to upset the lesson by delivering myself of the dirty lines.

A timid, gentle girl, who later became a nun, had the seat in front of me. She was laboriously parsing the sentence, when I whispered the lines to her.

"Cow is a common noun  
Stink enough to knock you down,  
Indicative mood, present tense,  
Slap your ass against the fence!"

The girl giggled, stuttered, and finally gave vent to laughter, while the girls within earshot tried to smother their convulsive outbursts.

In an instant I realized that I had run into trouble, but I sat with perfect decorum, my eyes fastened upon the grammar book. Sister Baptista, in freezing tones, demanded to know the cause of

the commotion and under direct fire of questioning the gentle girl, breaking down, reluctantly told that I was the culprit.

I was called to the front of the classroom and walked up slowly, terror clutching at my heart. Sister Baptista was always relentless in her search for truth and I could see myself being publicly expelled from school.

"Mary," she said, "what did you tell the girls which seems to be so terribly funny? Tell the class so we can all laugh."

"Sister, I told them a poem, but I can't repeat it now."

"Why not?"

"Because, well, because it has two dirty words in it."

"Very well, return to your seat and when the class is dismissed you will remain and recite the poem for me."

Great God, how I suffered as I watched the clock nearing the hour of three. How could I say the words "stink" and "ass" to this beautiful woman of God whom I revered and loved? She had probably never heard the words and would faint at the sound of them. And of course she would hate me forever after and I just could not bear that.

I had a reputation for bravado, but all courage had forsaken me and I was sunk in humiliation and despair. I told myself that I would take a beating, expulsion from school, or even death but never, never would I recite those dirty lines to that good holy nun.

Now I find the word stink very expressive and when a jazz conductor makes an abortion of a classical number, I turn off my radio and say "It stinks." In just the last month I have heard the "Meditation" from *Thais*, Liszt's "Liebestraum," and "The Barcarolle," from *Tales of Hoffman* massacred into swing music. I think it is sacrilege and feel that these and other musical gems should go down the years in their original form, as the masters gave them to us. Let the night-club conductor keep within his own metier and give us the jazz, swing and jitter-bug music in its expressive honesty, as it comes from Tin-Pan Alley.

As for the words ass, jackass, confounded ass and horse's ass, they are descriptive necessities in my current vocabulary.

When my classmates quietly filed out, they threw me glances of understanding and pity and none of them would like to have been in my shoes. When we were alone, Sister Baptista quietly said,

"Now, Mary, you may recite for me the poem you delivered today."

With blinding tears, I confessed that I was ashamed of the poem, and could never repeat it to her. With infinite dignity she said,

"Very well. It is now three o'clock and I can stay here until six, when I go to Chapel. If you have not told me at six o'clock, I shall report you to the Mother Superior. She will not be as lenient with you as I may be."

And so we sat, I quietly sobbing and Sister Baptista arranging her desk and correcting lesson papers. I suffered agony, but my shame, my reverence for the nun's habit and my adoration for Sister Baptista had combined to plunge me into a crushed silence. At intervals Sister would say,

"Well, have you changed your mind?"

But I only shook my head and sobbed again. After an hour of this tragic drama, Sister Baptista suggested that if I wrote the lines of the poem, instead of speaking them; it might be easier for me. I jumped at this idea and wrote the first three lines. After a terrific inner struggle I managed to write the fourth line and tremblingly laid the paper on her desk.

I returned to my little seat and put my head on my desk, wanting to die of shame. In a few moments I felt a hand on my shoulder and I looked up into a kind face which tried to appear stern. But I swear that a smile lurked behind that disciplinary expression.

"Mary," she said, "this is a very vulgar piece of writing. I am terribly disappointed in you, for I was beginning to expect fine things of you. However, if you promise to be a good girl in the

future, I shall forgive you this time and I shall not report the incident to Sister Eugenia."

I wanted to get down and kiss her feet, but I mumbled my thanks and hurried away. For three days, I could scarcely raise my eyes to meet hers. My shame lay heavy upon me, as it were. And on the fourth day, in passing my desk, she asked if I would like to stay after school and wash the blackboards. I was in the seventh heaven, for I knew that I was again in her good graces and my joy was unrestrained.

## II

### *O TO BE IN THE PYRENEES!*

ON SUNDAY mornings it was my father's custom to pass out our spending money. I was the paymaster and my allowance was fifty cents a week. Nan had twenty-five, Madge and Lily fifteen and two brothers five cents each. The brothers were too young to spend but father gave each one a little box to save the money until he should grow old enough to buy candy. One of these brothers is a spendthrift and the other one I am sure has some of the original nickels. With this condition of my financial status I incurred a debt which played an important part in my life.

One Saturday, when I was nearing fifteen, our doorbell rang and I answered, to be greeted by a very handsome young man. He called me by name, said he had heard I was interested in music and made some flattering remarks. He had by this time pushed himself into the hallway, so I invited him into the parlor. He made compliments about my lovely legs, (they were like string beans,) my beautiful eyes, (I had granulated eyelids from intensive study by kerosene lamps,) and he mentioned my interesting mouth which at this period I had thought of only as a place wherein to pack good food.

But I was completely entranced, knew nothing of high pressure salesmen and in less than ten minutes I had signed on the dotted line! I was to receive twelve bound volumes of instrumental and vocal music—no payment down, and one dollar a month for eighteen months. He bowed over my hand in parting and made me feel grown up and important.

I hid the signed bill of sale and told mother that he was only a

passing agent. There were many agents who came often to sell a string of strange brown beads, blessed and called Job's tears. Mother usually bought a string for the baby's neck, the beads being supposed to help the child cut his teeth with ease and no pain.

During the week that followed, I kept piling up my courage to face mother when the books came. They did arrive and I made my confession. Mother flew into a tantrum at my daring extravagance, plus the disgrace of a collector appearing monthly on our doorstep. And I was told in no uncertain terms that the books would be packed and returned to the publisher the next day. I spent that afternoon wallowing in their gorgeous contents and dreaming that they were mine. That night I was moping in our back parlor and my father came in and sat beside me. He noticed my tear-stained face and asked why I had been crying. I made my confession again and even said my act of contrition, and to my great joy, father said I might have the books. I was to give him the bill and he would send a money order. He had no check book, only bank books.

It seems that he and mother had talked it over and agreed that the books would keep me at the piano and perhaps take me away from the trashy repertoire which I was fast accumulating. I blessed my father for those books, then and many times thereafter. I still own the set. They are in my attic and when I rummage there on rainy days, I always feel a little clutching at my throat in handling them. For until I was nineteen years old I had never heard a big orchestra, attended a concert nor feasted on an opera. The dear old books were my emotional sustenance, and my only communion with the beautiful in music.

The instrumental volumes contained the important and popular classics in both simplified and original forms, together with some well known sonatas and concertos. The volumes of vocal music were really comprehensive. They included arias from the operas,

outstanding numbers from the oratorios and much of the finer literature of song. Like Nevins' "Rosary," these were "as a string of pearls to me." I was continually at the piano, my reading and technique showed a definite improvement and I was singing at every opportunity, numbers written for alto, bass, tenor and soprano. I was getting on well in French so I could stumble through that language. As for Italian and German, I sang the English translation, printed under the original lines.

And I feel that on those pages I found the bulwarks and ramparts of the bridge I was later to cross. How indeed, as I sat in our little parlor humming the tenor aria from *Martha*, could I hear across the years Enrico Caruso singing that aria while I stood in the wings of the Metropolitan Opera House, the uncontrolled tears rolling down my cheeks. And how could I know that one day Florence Easton would sing to my accompaniment, "Songs My Mother Taught Me," or that Richard Crooks would stand in the curve of my piano and sing Walters' Prize Song from *Die Meistersinger*—all these and many more treasured numbers, were in my eighteen dollar books!

I know now in looking back through the years, that these precious volumes were preparing the medium through which I should later contact my dearest and oldest friendships and eventually reach my goal.

My mother was a reader and her Sunday afternoons together with other spare moments were given over to novels. Our back parlor was littered with paper volumes by Charlotte M. Braeme, Ouida, Wilkie Collins and the like. I was too busy with my studies to look into them but one book did fall into my early hands and gave me my first peek into aesthetic literature.

When I was about fifteen, a copy of Owen Meredith's "Lucille" was given to my spinster aunt, who lived with us. Aunt Ann's reading was confined to the Bible, the lives of the Saints, and the

story of St. Thomas Aquinas. So with one hasty glance at "Lucille," she threw it aside. The first lines drew me into the book, which I read only three times. Whether it was the story or the easy flowing verse, or both I don't know, but I lived and loved and suffered with "Lucille." I checked up on my geography to be sure of the location of Lûchon in the Pyrenees. There was an illustration of "Lord Alfred" sitting at the square piano and "Lucille" was languidly leaning over him. The script below the picture read "He played Beethoven and Wagner's new music, not ill"! O to be in the Pyrenees with a lover who played Beethoven! And for many years afterwards, and apropos of nothing, I would toss off these lines—

"I desire nothing more, and I trust you will feel,  
I desire nothing much, your friend always, Lucille."

My impression of that book was profound and lasting. It fired my imagination and at that time it was for me the epitome of all that was beautiful in literature.

When I was about sixteen our astronomy class was taken by the good priest up to the Dudley Observatory. They were supposed to have one of the finest telescopes in the world. I looked through it and was strangely thrilled when I saw the rings about Saturn, with Uranus in the distance. But I was utterly amazed when I saw Jupiter with her four moons, and I saw them as plainly as I see our one moon! It was very disconcerting because when I was studying astronomy I still had an idea that heaven was up there in the blue. Coming back, I lived with all these conflicting thoughts for days and then I said to one of the nuns at school,

"They must have gorgeous moonlight on Jupiter. We get such beautiful moonlight here with one moon. Think of that place with four moons shining on it at the same time."

She said, "Yes, that's very interesting," and then naïve as I always was, I asked,

"Sister, I am upset about a great many things. Sister, where is heaven?"

She did not answer me at once. Looking far away into space, she replied:

"Child, heaven could be on the tip of your little finger." Then she dismissed me and I was more confused than ever. I was a good student at this time but I had never thought of other worlds with people living in them. Beyond our earth was the heavenly world, and to hear suddenly that maybe there were inhabitants on other planets was a bit confusing.

How often indeed we travel along strange roads, make detours, seem lost, suffer confusion, perhaps despair, and then suddenly we come upon an oasis of enlightenment and the way all seems so clear. I walked along many of those roads, but always there was a great urge for self-expression with me and I kept an inner light burning before its shrine.

The years from thirteen to seventeen, when I was graduated, were years of intense study. Sister Vincent was out to make a record for our class and one subject after another was piled upon us. Along with this there was always the religious training and at an age when I could recite the French and Latin poets and knew that the sun was ninety-three million miles from the earth, I was very naïve.

I thought that God the Father sat on a large throne, in His blue heaven in the sky. The Holy Ghost was on the left side and God's only Son, Jesus Christ sat on His right side. Then came the angels, archangels and saints in a huge stadium much like our present Hollywood Bowl. Behind this august assemblage there was seating room for all good Catholics who died in the faith. Far below that spot was Hell, where a red devil and his busy assistants kept piling on coal, I suppose oil burners are used now, so that the seething flames will never die out. All sinners were consigned to these flames never to return.

But there was a middle place called Purgatory for the in-betweens. If you were not good enough to enter immediately into the sight of God, you made a stop-over in Purgatory. I have recently heard a young priest describe its tortures as being equal to those of Hell, except there is a release from Purgatory and in time one can get to Heaven. Prayers and Masses said by the living and offered to God for the dead, help to expiate sin and speed the release of your loved ones. The priest's description of Purgatory was so vivid that one could easily get the impression that he had spent a week end there.

(I presume that the Purgatory idea is a throw-back from the Hebrew Bible. For I remember reading that the Lord who made frequent visits to Moses told him at one time that he was to demand a half shekel from all people over twenty years of age. The shekels were to be used as an offering in atonement for souls and the moneys spent for the service of the tabernacle. And the vestments of our priests and ministers of today seem to be later models of the fine linen coat, breeches and linen miter worn by Moses' brother Aaron.)

On All Soul's Day, three days after my mother's death, I heard a young priest speak, from his fount of wisdom. He told us that one had to be almost a saint to immediately enter the Divine Presence. And that most of our loved ones were assuredly in Purgatory. My mother was no saint, she was just a grand human being. She never did burn in Purgatory but went on to a blessed and well deserved peace.

I believe that in recent years, the Catholic Church dwells less on singing angels with harps, the agonies of Purgatory and the tortures of Hell fire. But we got plenty of it in my youth and what with my bigotry, intolerance and inhibitions, I found myself a confused soul. I was years in cleaning off the stubborn barnacles.

In this adolescent period, I was searching for revelations along lines of sex. There was nothing to be gleaned at home,—mother

and grandmother would whisper about these things and even stop talking when I entered the room. A school friend set me right about babies. She said there was no stork and laughed at the head of cabbage fable. She said that the baby came through the mother's navel. Believe it or not, I accepted that story until I was about sixteen years of age. For with all my mother's confinements, I saw and heard nothing.

I remember now that at different intervals mother would have her bed moved from the third floor to the back parlor. I hated that arrangement, but mother made excuses, it was too warm, or too cold, or she could not sleep well. Of course it was a pre-confinement precaution and placed us children out of the way, on the top floor. In the morning my father would proudly announce that we had a new sister or brother as the case might be. That was all.

Of course I lived in another era, impossible for this present generation to understand.

A school friend said that if I would look up certain passages in the Old Testament, I would find much to help me in my search. So I dragged out the family Bible which weighed not less than twelve pounds, and lying full length on the floor, I combed its pages. After reading pages and pages of begots and begots I found that Abraham at the age of one hundred lay with his wife Sarah who was ninety and she gave him a son, Isaac. Of course, Sarah having been barren, had given Abraham her beautiful Egyptian maidservant for consolation, in the meantime.

Isaac's birth would sound like a first rate miracle but I have seen miraculous happenings even in my time. The Unseen Power which makes a blade of grass, a full blown rose, or a rainbow, has much in reserve. And for the barren Sarah to become fertile might be a very simple matter. But if such a phenomenon happened today, I am sure that some skeptical wit would toss off a ribald remark to the effect that Abraham lived near a firehouse.

Polygamy was the order of the day and it must have been a healthy pastime, for the old patriarchs lived on indefinitely. I do feel that Solomon was a wonder, what with seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, his various wars, and the building of the temple, he sure was no loafer!

While polygamy is still in fashion, it is not legitimatized and must of necessity travel under cover. Its many pseudonyms are interesting and amusing.

I read also that if a wife lay with a man other than her husband, or was even suspected of the same, the said husband was exhorted to bring her to the priest, to be cursed. The priest poured over the unfortunate one, holy water mixed with dust taken from the Tabernacle floor. If the woman was innocent the curse set upon her was only a passing gesture but if she was guilty, the curse was in effect, and the words of the ritual ran thus—

The Lord will make thy belly to swell  
And thy thigh to rot!

How times have changed; our jealousies and infidelities of today are headlined in the newspapers. If the delinquent one is pretty and can throw in a dash of blackmail or murder, a lucrative vaudeville engagement may ensue.

But my favorite Bible story, in my search for sex knowledge, was about David. When David saw from the roof of his palace the beautiful Bathsheba in her bath, he became enamoured of her. He sent his soldiers to her abode, had Bathsheba brought to him and he lay with her. He then sent her home and ordered her husband Uriah to appear before him. Poor unsuspecting Uriah was given a letter which he was to deliver by hand to David's General, who was at war. The letter said in effect that Uriah was to be placed in the hottest forefront of the battle—which of course was promptly done, and he was annihilated. Uriah then being dispensed

with, David took Bathsheba to wife and Solomon in all his glory came into the picture. This procedure would today do credit to a first class gangster but David's repentance in his Psalms, has left us something beautiful—as good so often comes from bad. As for me, the Twenty-third Psalm would wipe out all of David's indiscretions.

At this point the dictionary was consulted for light upon adultery and fornication. And with all this patchwork of assembled ideas, I felt well-informed.

But of the emotions, various glandular disturbances and the sex urge, I knew nothing. These things came to me, all in good time and when I was well balanced enough to meet them. And I am not sure whether we girls of that Victorian era were not as fully equipped to meet life, as are the over-sophisticated girls of today.

Every spring, Sister Eugenia would announce and read to us the play which was to be performed at the Closing Exercises. My contribution to the program were small parts in the play, a gypsy song and dance with tambourine—my father rebelled at the price of the tambourine. And I was often in Lily Drills, which meant that you were draped in white cheese cloth and cavorted to music through Delsarte movements—waving a Calla lily!

But this spring when I was sixteen, I had another thrill. Sister Eugenia, pompous and austere, read us the new play which was in three acts. It was called "Dolores" or "Through the Fires of Sorrow." The doors between the two upper classrooms were rolled back and we sat entranced as the story unfolded.

The role of Dolores called for the entire gamut of one's emotions and I was sick with envy for the lucky girl who would play it. After the reading, we sat in hushed expectancy, awaiting names in the cast. "The role of Dolores," said Sister Eugenia, "will be played by,"—and the pause seemed interminable, "Mary Flannery!" I was truly dazed for a moment and only came to at the sound of

applause from the other girls. It was the first applause to fall on my ears and I had not even earned it! I was later to know applause may be casual or deeply inspired, but to a hard-working artist, it is a sign of approval and a necessary stimulus. Applause can also be paid for, the price paid regulating the time and length of the applause. I refer to the claque at the Metropolitan Opera House.

My mother was not overjoyed at the news of my playing Dolores, she said that I would probably eat, drink and sleep with the part, and as a result fail in my then difficult studies and not be graduated. But I vowed to study diligently and was allowed to accept the role of Dolores.

One day Sister Eugenia sent for me, and sitting in her private study, she told me that she had decided to call in a man who was an expert in stagecraft and he was to rehearse the principal characters—that sounded momentous. Sister said that if I would memorize the long two-page speech in the second act, and have it ready the next day, I was to have a present. And this present was to be a hand-painted plaque of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Sister Eugenia painted exquisitely on both silk and china and these plaques, one of which I had seen, were her masterpieces. In the center of the plaque there was a large red heart, and from the heart were falling drops of blood. The whole was surrounded by a brilliant halo of gold—I can see it now and I planned to put it on a standing easel on my piano.

I learned the difficult pages, played the role successfully, I believe, and never did receive that plaque. Sister mentioned it once or twice and then proceeded to ignore the whole thing. I was hurt beyond words and never really forgave her. Keen disappointments can be felt long after keen pleasures are forgotten. And sins of omission sting but little less than those of commission. One thing I learned then and there, to hesitate long before making any promise, and to hesitate much longer before breaking one. And this I believe

is especially true with children. After all, children do and should trust their elders and broken promises, in the formative years, can leave wounds.

The age of seventeen found me a graduate, with two gold medals pinned on my chest. I was the Valedictorian of my class. One medal was for the highest number of Regents' counts, the other one Father X gave for excellence in Latin. Much had been crammed into my head, and I had read a lot, so I felt like the sweet girl graduate who at eighteen told her parents that she did not know how one head could hold all the knowledge she possessed.

Father X called on mother immediately after graduation. He had a plan to offer. He thought that my aptitude for study, together with other characteristics marked me for a career, and suggested that I become a female doctor. With my high rating, he thought he could get me a scholarship at Cornell University, not far from the city of Albany.

Mother was horrified at the thought of a lady doctor and furthermore could not afford to keep me for four more years of study. The other children were growing up and should have a chance, so I must be equipped to earn my living.

I was crazy to study piano at the New England Conservatory of Music, but this being financially impossible, I took an entrance examination for the Albany Training School for Teachers and entered there the following September.

I felt that I was putting my head in a noose and hated it, but mother painted a rather glowing picture. She said that the hours of a school teacher were easy, there was always ten months' work and two months' vacation, there was a pension if you taught until you cracked up, as it were, and a school teacher was always respected. So I fell into line, looking forward to an uninteresting future, with security and respectability for high lights. And the only ingratiating study in that rather drab year was psychology, which I found

fascinating. And it was to be more than helpful in the years to come.

Freud was referred to, but only in passing. I was to read him later but with reservations, for I think some of his theories were confounding, to say the least. Many of his devoted admirers went in for the monkey-gland operation, not necessarily endorsed by him and not necessarily successful, if we are to credit the discouraging case of the woman who found her husband hanging from the chandelier, eating peanuts.

At the close of the year in Training School our professor announced that he would like to take the class to New York for the teachers' examination. There was a dearth of teachers at that time. A New York school teacher was well paid, and for twelve months of the year. Mother saw no sense in my going as I was to teach in Albany, but Professor F. wanted the class to go as a whole. He hoped to make a record for the Albany Training School. He did, for thirty-six of us went and thirty-four passed the test.

We were to be in New York overnight, and each girl was somehow provided for, some with relations and others went to a hotel. I was all for the hotel spree but father had written his uncle, then living in New York. The said uncle, whom I had met, was waiting for me at five o'clock, on the steps of the Board of Education building, still standing at Park Avenue and Fifty-Ninth Street. I was piloted up to Harlem where my relations had a lovely old brownstone house. It was between Lenox and Seventh Avenues, then beautiful wide thoroughfares. The neighborhood has since changed its complexion and is in the hands of Father Divine and his angels.

The most exciting news I could bring from New York was the story of a course luncheon, taken in some small hotel. It was near Fifty-Ninth Street and the class went there en masse, reservations having been made in advance. My acquaintance with the *potages* was limited to thick vegetable soup, chicken soup with rice and

lamb broth with barley, when one was ill. So the *purée* of rice intrigued me and I wanted mother to try it. She said it must have been some rice boiled down, with the addition of milk and then some flour for thickening. It was just stylish nonsense and she would stick to our pot of vegetable soup, with its nourishing marrow bones and shank of beef.

My peek at New York was so hurried that other than the luncheon, elevated trains and mobs of people on the streets, the big city had left no impression. For all I cared it could stay there forever and had no lure for me. So in September, and in my eighteenth year, I had two teacher's licenses, one for Albany, one for New York, and no appointment. My friend Marie and some others of the class had already gone to New York and I was very lonely.

Mother inquired from our farmer, who brought eggs and vegetables, as to a vacancy in a country school. I was willing to try it, I yearned for adventure and the thought of walking the country lanes to the little schoolhouses, carriage rides, sleigh rides and perhaps marrying a rich farmer, was better than humdrum and idleness.

But there was no prospect in view and time dragged on. In early October came the big envelope from the Board of Education in New York City. I trembled as I opened it and there was my official appointment to teach in a Public School in Manhattan.

I received it on Thursday and was to report for duty the following Monday. There was general consternation in the house. Neither mother nor father wanted me to leave home. I pleaded and begged for a trial. I promised to resign at Christmas which was only two and a half months away, and I won my point. The next day mother and I went shopping. We bought a smart tailored skirt, two new shirtwaists, a new hat, new gloves and a large canvas suitcase. We owned no other suitcase, because no one in our home ever traveled. Father had always yearned to visit Ireland, but rearing and educat-

ing the family had made that a financial impossibility. The suitcase held my few other belongings, including one party dress, two quilted petticoats made by my grandmother and my woolen under-drawers, for winter. These drawers were heavy and came below the knee. My dresses being long, the warm ugly drawers were a hidden comfort. And before another winter had passed I was to learn that woolen drawers were not being worn, at least not in the set wherein I traveled. Still, on a later occasion, when I was in the company of an old *roué*, they were as much protection as the hideous chastity belt which I afterwards saw in the Cluny Museum in France. When this venturesome old sport lifted my skirt I don't know which of us was the more shocked.

Mother said I was too youthful in appearance and must put up my hair. It had been in two braids, coiled at the nape of my neck. So we drew the braids around my head in coronet style in an endeavor to make me look like a school teacher. I arranged by letter for Marie to meet me, and I was to board with her Aunt Kate.

### III

#### *MAKING FRIENDS WITH DEMONS*

ON SATURDAY afternoon a very bewildered young girl walked into the Grand Central Station. The crowds pushing and tearing about, the general noise and confusion frightened me. For a few minutes I felt helpless, and then through the sea of faces, I saw little Marie wildly waving. We hugged and kissed and I was comforted.

I was for riding on a trolley car but my hat box and canvas bag were so unmanageable that we took a hansom cab. It was enchanting to sit back in the cab and gaze at the shop windows and the crowds, but I nearly fainted when I paid the cabby, for the amount was over a dollar. My salary was to be sixty dollars a month for the first year, and I must not go in for such extravagance.

On Sunday morning Marie took me to Mass at the Paulist Fathers on West Fifty-Ninth Street. After Mass, we took a west side elevated train, changed at South Ferry, and got off at Franklin Square. My school was only three short blocks away and we passed by the building. I was completely terrified, for the section of town was known as the Five Points section, the worst in New York City and some Italian youngsters on the street hurled strange invectives upon us, using words that made me shudder.

Monday morning when I entered the old schoolhouse I had with me all my beautiful ideals, so carefully instilled at the Training School. The children's young fresh minds must be approached with delicacy, the children themselves were to be governed by love, not fear, and any form of corporal punishment was absolutely taboo.

Ye Gods, what an awful shock was awaiting me! The principal of the school was a hatchet-faced old maid, about fifty years of age. I being eighteen and a half thought she was an old witch. The age of fifty has no terrors for me at the present writing. Miss S., we shall call her, asked me to sit on the platform until after Assembly. All the rolling doors were thrown open and at a given bell the pupils marched in to music—if you could call it that.

The teacher at the piano was a frail old creature, worn out with years of drudgery. The march which she played, was like a nondescript funeral dirge. Any self-respecting corpse would arise from his bier and demand that she do better.

Miss S. read the Twenty-third Psalm and the poor Italian, Jewish and Irish pupils stood at attention and looked into space. Although it was October, the children dragged through a song of spring, there was a salute to the flag, and with the deadly march they ambled back to their classrooms. Miss S. instructed me to go to Class 2B and observe for a couple of days, until my own class would be formed.

Class 2B was an all boys' class and the boys were demons out of Hell. Two youngsters were shooting crap in the corner of the classroom, others were sitting on tops of the desks, and the classroom had the appearance of a playground. The young teacher, a Miss C., about twenty-three, said, "Let us take out our readers." And one bully answered, "What the hell for!" Miss C. flew down the aisle brandishing an eighteen-inch ruler. After a five-minute battle the boy took out his reader and by the time Miss C. reached her own desk, there was an avalanche of spit balls hurled at both of us. There was also a well-chalked board-eraser thrown our way. I dodged it, but poor Miss C. caught it on the head and I helped her remove the chalk dust, to the delight of the whole class.

The afternoon session was an equally terrorizing one and at three o'clock some of the boys stuck their thumbs to their noses as

they ran out. Miss C. confided to me that she was being transferred uptown. She said, "No one stays here very long, it's just a short cut to the madhouse."

And riding to my new home that lovely October afternoon, the wonders of New York and the elevated trains took second place in my thoughts. I was still in that hectic classroom with those dirty, ragged, undernourished, bad boys. I wanted to wash their faces, coax them into docility and maybe tell them some of Anderson's fairy tales. But how to approach it seemed about as simple as making friends with a bevy of young wildcats!

Dear Marie listened patiently to my discouraging tale and begged me not to return to Albany, for such was my avowed intention. She, herself, was teaching in the Jewish quarter on East Houston Street and was finding it interesting. She said that New York had much to offer and after all, one can get used to anything. Of course, one can get used to anything, if death does not overtake one, in the process.

If I were to go "balmy on the crumpet," as the cockney English say, I should probably go through the transition stage without the knowledge of what was happening. By the time the cerebral activities had become mostly stagnant, I would be well used to the condition and probably live on in lunatic bliss.

On Wednesday, of this same week I was given my own class, 2A, about twenty-eight boys. I faced them with a sinking heart. The morning was a bedlam, and although I had planned some lovely lessons, the time was spent in coaxing, cajoling and screaming for order. I began the afternoon session with a splitting headache and a half-filled classroom, the other half having played truant. Thursday noon, dejected, and worn out, I went to the teachers' lunchroom. This dreary dungeon had one window; if the window was opened, one shook with cold, when it was closed one suffocated for want of air. There was a two-burner gas stove and

one of the teachers was preparing tea, or some wild concoction to which she gave that name.

I announced that I was on my way to the Board of Education to ask for a transfer, although the children and the neighborhood held a strange fascination for me.

One splendid athletic woman about ten years older than myself, and a teacher of the 4B class, suggested that I stay on a bit and offered to help me with the discipline. And shortly after one o'clock, Miss F. opened the door of my unruly classroom. The boys stiffened in their seats, put their hands behind their backs and sat like tin soldiers. The transformation was instantaneous and these erstwhile fiends looked like cherubs! The effect on me was startling and I wondered as to what power this woman possessed.

Miss F. announced, in no uncertain terms, that she wanted order and absolute obedience that afternoon. She said she would return at three o'clock and I was to keep the class until her arrival. The bad list was to be written on the blackboard.

At two o'clock I had about twenty bad names, and for good behavior, even for five minutes, I erased a name. When the bell sounded for dismissal there were only five names left.

One of the devils dashed past me and ran out. I planted myself before the door, ruler in hand and threatened to annihilate anyone else who tried to pass.

Dear Miss F. called the culprits out, one by one, and taking a firm grip at the back of the collar, whacked each one soundly on the backside and the calves of the legs. Some of them cried and she promptly said, "One more sound and another whipping."

The other boys watching the punishment, sat terrorized again in tin soldier fashion. Before dismissing the class, Miss F. said that she would visit us again the next day at three, and I walked to the train with her.

Miss F. was one of the most sympathetic, lovable and kindly souls

whom I have ever known. She unfolded to me the background of these pathetic children. The sin that cried loudest was poverty. When I speak of this poverty, which I was later to know in all its deadly aspects, I mean the dire privation of the necessities for clean and decent living.

The majority of the children were undernourished, ragged, dirty and lawless. They had no respect for parents, home, school, God or man. Miss F. loved them all and was happy in rescuing many of them from the depths.

I found myself pitying the youngsters, and pity being akin to love, I trailed along and before I knew it, I was up to my neck in settlement work. After about four visits from Miss F. and upon her advice, I took over the discipline myself. I bravely trounced three ringleaders and thereby found myself respected. I realized that law and order had to be established, before learning could be imparted, and I had to be the gang leader.

Once when a bully told me to go to Hell and with voluminous blasphemy suggested that I stay there indefinitely, I promptly put on a good show. I swooped down the aisle and gave him a Joe Louis which sent him sprawling out of the seat. The exquisite, silent approval of the class was thrilling and I felt as Al Capone must have felt in his halcyon days. My stock rose by the minute; in fact the boys were even becoming friendly and very soon gifts of apples, penknives, dirty candy and stolen trinkets were finding their way to my desk. Once I received a box of pink laxatives.

The name of the donor of this gift was a handsome brute, Mario, he of the limpid eyes. His truancy had put him so far behind in class, that he was demoted and left on my hands. We became friends and I made him my monitor. This office called for his keeping my class in order while I dashed down three flights to the teachers' toilet.

This chamber of horrors was dark, damp, lacked ventilation and

if the plumbing worked, it must have been on Saturdays and Sundays. It was far less enticing than the open-air arrangements so aptly described by Chic Sales and any benefits which accrued from these hurried excursions must be checked up to physical exercise in climbing the stairs. Lord Chesterfield would never have chosen that booby-hatch for his contemplation of the Latin poets.

About Thanksgiving time, the old soul who played for assembly music was ill. The principal called for a volunteer to play in her absence. Of course I offered my services and was thereby elected to the job. I played some stirring marches, including the most popular John Philip Sousa marches, and unearthed some rousing good songs. I pulled that assembly music out of the doldrums where it had slumbered for years. The result was gratifying to us all and any credit must go to youthful enthusiasm and love of my work.

Life in Aunt Kate's flat was very cozy. Marie was an adorable companion and Aunt Kate a grand cook. I paid six dollars a week board and slept with Marie. How the table was managed I never knew, but I enjoyed my dinners and many a tempting dish came from Aunt Kate's kitchen. After a light box luncheon carried to school, hunger had weaned me into new eating habits and I found myself liking kidney stew and roquefort cheese with beer.

Toward the end of my second teaching year, as we were nearing the vacation period, a Miss George, another teacher, had a nice talk with me. I went up to her little apartment and over our luncheon table she told me about Mr. Ely.

One Saturday when Miss George had taken about ten boys on the Staten Island Ferry, a nice old gentleman spoke to her and asked about the boys. Miss George explained that she was taking them out for a peek at the country and they would play baseball that afternoon. Mr. Ely was much interested and said that if Miss George could arrange the transportation, he, Mr. Ely, would entertain about fourteen boys for two weeks.

Mr. Ely had a lovely old home in Binghamton, New York. He owned considerable acreage, and on a hill commanding a glorious view of the surrounding country stood an old tower. Mr. Ely proposed to put sleeping cots on the upper floors of the tower, and use the big downstairs room for a dining room. He would also provide a cook, who would act as general housekeeper. You may believe that Miss George lost no time in accepting this splendid offer.

The *New York Tribune* agreed to provide the tickets and Miss George and her little charges went that summer to Binghamton. Her description of the place, the wild enthusiasm of the boys, their happy and healthful two weeks, made an irresistible appeal to me. Of course I edged my way into the next vacation party, and when school closed I bought my own ticket and Miss George and I left for Binghamton. The entourage which departed on the Erie Railroad, was a sight indeed. There were fourteen boys, twelve Italians and two Irish boys. The traveling outfits and the luggage equipment was ludicrous to the other passengers. But we, Miss George and I, were happy to see the boys all scrubbed and in holiday mood. Each boy was instructed to come clean, bring a change of underwear, and an extra shirt. A sleeping garment was optional. We knew that the boys had none. This equipment was carried in newspapers, boxes and in one or two gay Italian shawls. There were no traveling bags or suitcases in evidence. One boy had thirty cents for spending money, a few had ten cents and the remaining boys had empty pockets. The youngsters had been chosen with great care. We took mostly the undernourished and unhappy cases. To these we added two funmakers, and leaders, including one or two of our special pets.

One of my pathetic cases was a gentle, bright and delicate boy named Dominick. With tears in his eyes and in his voice, Dominick told me that his mother could not let him go. There was a job waiting for him when school closed, which paid five dollars a week. There were four other children in the family and his mother wanted

the money. If any child needed and deserved two weeks in the country, it was Dominick. He told me that once he had seen trees in Central Park and he would love to see more trees and play on the grass. Something just had to be done about him, so Miss George took the situation in hand and we called upon his mother. At the sight of ten dollars, his two weeks salary, provided by Miss George and myself, the mother capitulated and Dominick's joy was something to behold.

The general excitement of the journey began on the train. But few of the boys had ever been on a railroad train. Every boy wanted a window seat, so law and order had to be established then and there. A boy who had a window seat understood that after a period he was to exchange seats with the boy on the aisle. There were wild and joyous exclamations over the trees, the fields, the cows and each and every picture of country life. These drab city dwellers were in the first throes of a vacation in the country.

Mr. and Mrs. Ely met our train at Binghamton and provided carriages to take us up the lovely winding road that led to the tower. Mr. Ely took us through the rooms and each boy deposited his little pack of belongings beside his clean cot. Decorum prevailed during Mr. Ely's short stay and then pandemonium broke loose! Those boys just went crazy with joy. They jumped up and down, waltzed, or rolled on the grass like lambkins.

"Can we really stay here?" and "I don't ever want to go home," were only two of their expressions of uncontrolled joy.

Our housekeeper, Mrs. Farrell, was the perfect person for her job. She was a middle-aged Irish woman, kindly, a lover of children and the possessor of the culinary art to no small degree.

One youngster had in an incredibly short space of time picked a huge bunch of daisies. He said that they were to take back to his mother, at the end of the two weeks!

Our first dinner menu, and I think my memory serves me cor-

rectly, was one that was repeated more than once during our stay and we hove to, like farm hands. There were hamburger meat balls, with brown gravy, tons of billowy mashed potatoes, succotash, and huge piles of homemade bread. It seemed to me that Mrs. Farrell baked enough bread, pies, and cakes, in that two weeks to have fed an army, but our appetites almost outdistanced her baking. There were two big china pitchers of milk, one at each end of the table. Mr. Ely had given instructions that each boy might have as much milk as he could drink and the boys took him at his word. For dessert there were two mammoth apple pies, baked in long tin pans, so each child had a very generous helping.

Miss George sat at one end of the table and I at the other. Mrs. Farrell made coffee for us whenever we wished it, but the boys drank milk three times a day.

At our first dinner, there was such an onslaught upon the butter dishes that we appointed a custodian for the butter. Johnny S., a puny Irish lad, but a wise old soul whom the boys called "Pop," was a table executive, and monitor of the butter. Mrs. Farrell said she had not figured on two pounds of butter at one meal! Before each meal "Pop" would cut good sized squares of butter and place one on each plate. The butter dish he kept at his place and if a boy asked for more butter John carefully measured another piece for him.

We made out a schedule for the day and it ran about like this:

- 8— Rising bell—wash hands and face and brush hair and teeth.
- 8:30 Breakfast.
- 9:00 Chores—carry pails of water from a well. Wash clothes or write home.
- 10:00 Depart for swimming and berry picking.
- 12:30 Mid-day dinner.
- 2:30 Baseball or games and in rainy weather, story-telling—or rest.
- 6:00 Supper.
- 7:00 General relaxation, songs, or stories.
- 8:30 Bedtime.

One afternoon Miss George would umpire the ball game and the next afternoon I took my turn.

The well was a fair distance from the tower and downhill, so the journey up hill with buckets of water for Mrs. Farrell was bringing complaints, and lazy boys were dodging the work. We made another schedule and hung it on the wall. Each boy took his turn, so many buckets, three times a day. For disobedience, insolence, obscene language, with which their vocabulary was well spiced, we imposed a fine of five trips to the well, or ten if the offense called for it. It was the only discipline we ever had to use.

It worked beautifully for a few days, then a bright lad had an idea. Two or three boys who happened to be in good standing, helped the boy who was punished, he in turn promised to do likewise when needed. Many hands make light work and there were few lone journeys to the well. Mrs. Farrell had plenty of water, and a quiet order soon prevailed.

We found a beautiful swimming hole in a most picturesque spot on the Chenango River, and many happy hours were spent there. Returning from the swim, we picked red and black raspberries and what pies Mrs. Farrell made—I can still smell them!

On Sundays we had chicken, and Mr. Ely sent us ice cream. The children really groaned under their full bellies. The gain in weight, when we were ready to depart for New York, was from three to six pounds per person, and I am afraid that included Miss George and me!

Mr. Ely came up to see us on two or three evenings, and we sat on the porch and had a gay time. The boys related different incidents of New York and of their lives at home. And what with the Italian accent and dramatic fervor, laughter was the order of the evening and the boys outdid themselves for our entertainment.

At no time during our stay at the camp, as we called it, could these dear children believe that the food would really last, and that each one could eat all that he desired.

Of these two weeks I can only write with pleasure and even nostalgia. I was young and happy, I loved the boys, loved working with Miss George and the care-free joy of the youngsters was contagious.

At the mention of our return to New York, there was pouting, sulking and tears. We had saved all the empty tin cans which had contained tomatoes, corn, or peas as the case might be. These, the boys filled with berries to bring to their mothers and with arms full of daisies, tin cans and sketchy luggage we were again amusing to all eyes. When we disbanded in New York I was lonesome for the boys and glad to get back to Albany.

We made a second vacation trip to Binghamton, eliminating some boys and adding new ones. It is true that the children had a grand two weeks, but so did I, and Binghamton with my Italian boys has always been a dear memory.

## IV

### *MY ITALIAN GALLERY*

#### SILVIO

**M**Y INTRODUCTION to Silvio was unexpected and a bit spectacular. I had noticed his name as an absentee. The new term was ending its first week and I inquired as to the whereabouts of this Silvio.

The boys told me that Silvio was a gang leader, hated schools and teachers and only came when the truant officers could find him. His mother was janitress of the tenement building in which they lived, so Silvio was called "Silvio the Boss."

One afternoon about two o'clock the class was engaged in a writing lesson, and the classroom was very quiet. It was my third term of teaching and I had become a disciplinarian. The door flew open, a huge, burly truant officer stepped into the room, dragging by the shirt collar a disreputable urchin, whose age was about twelve. The truant officer literally flung the child across the classroom, hurling after him every unkind and disparaging invective that came to his lips. Then turning to me, he screamed and ranted on to the effect that Silvio was the worst boy in the neighborhood, a confirmed truant, and would soon be put away. The class was evidently quite used to such scenes, and after the officer's departure, they quietly continued with the writing lesson.

Silvio had picked himself from the floor and was slouching in one of the back seats. I pretended to ignore him, while I formulated my plan of action. Walking down to his seat, I asked him to

move over and I sat down beside him. He turned upon me a pair of eyes which were like two huge luscious marrons. I held his eye for a few seconds, smiled at him and then winked. I was flirting with him. I won a lovely smile in return and in that fleeting exchange of smiles there was born understanding and friendship, which later grew into deep affection.

Silvio was tall for his years, of slight build, very handsome and very dirty. His black hands rested on the desk and I put my white hand quite close to the black ones. Laughingly, and in low tones, I said to him, "One would think that I was a white person and you were a Negro!" He blushed, snatched his hands from the desk and put them behind his back—a good sign I thought.

"Now Silvio," I said, "the boys told me that you are the leader of your gang, and you hate school and school teachers. But you are not going to hate me and you don't dare to come to school for a few days, because you would like school and you would like me."

Raising his voice, so the class could hear him, he said,

"I dare to do anything and I ain't afraid of nobody."

And lowering my voice I admitted his supremacy and asked his help. I told him that I had two or three unruly boys in the class. If he would come to school for a few days, he could police them for me, and make my work easier and happier. A new light came into his face, the idea had appealed to him and he promised to stay after school and talk it over. In our little tête-à-tête, I flattered Silvio upon his leadership and good looks, also pointing out the fact that a boy who could not read, write and spell properly would never be a real leader, the other boys would eventually laugh at him and call him a "dope." I made impression enough for him to promise that he would try school for a few days, especially if it would help me with the bad boys.

When Silvio appeared the next morning the pupils gasped and so did I, for he was scrubbed and polished down to his shoes, and

strutted around with the airs of a West Point cadet. Silvio became my staunch friend, my monitor, and he never missed a day at school. He often escorted me to the elevated train after school and I would sometimes buy him an ice-cream soda, at Perry's near the Brooklyn Bridge. Sodas were then five cents and my budget could take that strain. I took him on both trips to Binghamton. He told me that he dreamed of me often and some nights he hugged his pillow because he was thinking of me.

He left school at fourteen when he received working papers and I told the boys to tell him to come and see me. The message came to me that he couldn't come to see me because he was wearing long pants and was ashamed!

This was Silvio's home story: He lived in two rooms with his mother, his father having disappeared soon after his birth. There was an older sister who was married, had three children and lived in Jersey. She was very poor and could be of no financial help to the two in New York.

Silvio's mother used to get up at five o'clock, depart to clean offices, return about ten and clean and supervise the tenement where they lived. For remuneration, she had free rent for their two rear rooms on the fourth floor. When she left for work, she tried to arouse Silvio. He would refuse to get up at that hour, but would promise to arrive at school on time. He often slept through until ten o'clock, and finding him still in bed, his mother would beat him unmercifully and then beat his dog! Silvia showed me the marks on his shoulders, for I had refused to believe him. It was pitiful to see the discolored bruises left by the leather strap. Silvio hated his mother and loved his dog. He told me that the dog did tricks, licked his hands and waited for him to come home.

After the beatings Silvio would disappear for a few days, sleeping in hallways and eating whenever and wherever he would steal—usually bananas or fruit. He would return only because he knew

his dog was crying for him and had had nothing to eat. Then after a few days at school, Silvia would oversleep again and the routine of beatings and truancy would follow.

After Silvio had been with me for about three months, and his reformation seemed definite and lasting, I decided to visit his mother. I made the visit without Silvio's knowledge and took one of my boys as interpreter. I found the mother, a woman of about fifty years, who looked sixty-five. She was fat, stooped to a degree and complained of rheumatism. She thanked me, and with tears, for what I had done for Silvio. She said he was a changed boy. His father had left her when Silvio was six months old, and was now living in Italy with a younger woman. The struggle had been awful and she had no blame for Silvio, he never had had a chance. She was sorry she had whipped him, but some days she was so tired that she went crazy and did not know what she was doing. She produced a pint of home-made Italian wine and each of us had a glass of it.

At parting she kissed my hand and said some prayers over me. I don't know what she prayed, but believing in prayer, as I do, I know that her blessings came my way.

From some of the boys who used to visit me, I learned that Silvio at the age of nineteen had married, that he was a truck-driver and was living on the outskirts of Brooklyn. About sixteen years later Silvio came into my life again. The tragic death of my husband had been given extensive publicity in the daily papers. Silvio read the news and wrote me a beautiful letter. He mentioned that I had befriended him in the early days and now he stood ready to help me in any possible way.

I was touched by his letter and in about three months, it took that length of time for me to even remember my obligations, I sent Silvio a note of appreciation. In a few days I received a box of American Beauty roses and a case of champagne! This was in pro-

hibition times and I knew that such affluence could hardly be associated with the income of a truckdriver. He telephoned me and begged to be allowed to see me. My younger sister was visiting me at the time, and together we received Silvio and his wife. He was handsome as ever and his wife was a very pretty woman of Irish parentage. They had five children, owned their own home in Brooklyn and had two expensive automobiles. Under pressure of my questioning Silvio admitted that he was in the liquor racket, as it was called. He was a sub-lieutenant for one of the leading gangsters. He said he had got tired of being poor and was now in the easy money.

He spoke of the ice-cream sodas and neckties I had given him, and of our happy days at Binghamton, when he had first seen cows and grass. He insisted that I had once bought him a pair of shoes, for which I had paid one dollar and ninety-eight cents—I had completely forgotten it. I could not resist the invitation to see his children and we agreed that my friend Marie and I would take dinner with them at some future time.

In about another month, Silvio's wife confessed that it had taken that length of time to prepare for our visit, Silvia drove Marie and me to their Brooklyn home. There was a feast set before us and we were wined and dined to the point of exhaustion.

The children were a revelation, one more beautiful than another. The two older girls were attending school. Silvio intended to give his children every advantage which had been denied him.

It is true that Silvio was a racketeer and made his living under most hazardous circumstances, by smuggling in liquor, for the thirsty New Yorkers. He laughingly told me how the "cops," as he called them, would often on rainy and foggy nights remove their uniforms and help with the unloading! Of course they were amply paid and in cold cash.

True, this was terrible, but as Silvio naïvely reminded me, our

judges, bank presidents, and government officials, men who were trusted and sat in high places, were then, and are still for that matter, steeped in graft and corruption.

The road of greed is a wide one and beckons to many. But how can we differentiate among the weaklings who take that road? Are they not all motivated by the lust for easy money? I have not seen Silvio since that visit, but this I do know, that my poor little Italian boy is a good husband, an affectionate father and a generous provider.

### NICK

One day, when I was teaching a 2B class, the school principal brought to me a gorgeous boy named Nick. You will notice that many of my boys were handsome—and they were! As for Nick, Raphael's cherubs had nothing on him for classic beauty.

He was tall, well-built, clean for a change, and about twelve years old. The principal said that Nick was an excellent scholar and really belonged in a higher grade. But he had just arrived from Italy and spoke no English. So he had to remain in my grade and become familiar with the language. Then we could skip him to a higher grade.

Nick had a brilliant mind, he was angelic in behavior, aristocratic in manner, and affectionate. It was love at first sight with both of us. And with my limited Italian, and Nick's tremendous capacity for learning, he was soon able to express himself in English.

His mother had died in Italy, and Nick traveled alone to New York, to live with an older married brother. This brother had a family of three children and was a house painter.

In a very short time, Nick occupied the first seat, in the first row, a spot reserved for the boy who had the highest weekly rating in conduct and studies. Nick's aptitude for our simple mathematics was such that he had always finished his problems while

the other boys were still entangled. And in his spare time he was making little drawings on odd bits of paper.

One day I gave him a clean sheet of drawing paper and asked him to do something that he especially liked. He brought to my desk an excellent sketch of a woman's head. The features were regular and well defined, the hair was piled high in soft curls. The drawing looked like the photograph of a cameo. One glance at the work told me that I was face to face with an extraordinary talent. The picture, he told me, was that of his mother, as he remembered her. He said that she had been a beautiful woman and Nick's gentle beauty surely confirmed the truth of that statement. I bought a cheap set of colored crayons for Nick, gave him some drawing paper and told him to work at home and from time to time show me his drawings. He used the crayons but little, preferring to work in pencil. He drew flowers, houses, ships, copied illustrations from the reading book, but always turned to portraits.

And now what was I to do with this outstanding talent when Nick himself was counting the days until he could obtain working-papers and help with his support? I knew very few persons of wealth, but I approached a few potential sponsors in an effort to get Nick some private lessons in drawing. I met with no success; the individuals whom I had summoned for help, were already caring for protégés and I could awaken no interest in my little Italian boy.

I went in despair to Cooper Institute, hoping to place Nick in an evening class in the art department. But, of course, and I should have known it, he was too young and could only enter there when he had left day school and had got his working-papers. And what with facing other problems, boys whose cases were of dire necessity and required much of my time, I neglected Nick and his artistic education.

After my marriage he called on me and told me that he was a house painter, working as assistant to his brother. He had a beauti-

ful sweetheart, whom he soon hoped to marry. Again after an interval of years, Nick paid me another call. He was married and living out near Coney Island. He now owned the painting business, his brother having been killed in an accident. It seems that one day while the two brothers were painting a house, the scaffold snapped at one end. Nick's brother was thrown to the ground and instantly killed.

For nearly ten years, Nick disappeared from my horizon and in 1935 a strange coincidence brought me news of him. I had closed my country home that winter and had taken an apartment at the Hotel Lombardy in New York City. I was giving a large cocktail party at my hotel, to honor Rosa Ponselle, who had sung her first performance of *Carmen*. In discussing the party with Rosa on the telephone, I was taken by no small surprise when she asked me if I had ever been a school-teacher, and did I ever really teach a boy named Nick.

So I rolled back the years and told Rosa that Nick had been my pupil and a great pet. Nick had just finished some work in Rosa's apartment, he had re-decorated her mantel, done some fresco work on the walls, and contributed other artistic touches. In the course of his work he had asked Miss Ponselle if she had ever known a Metropolitan singer named Mary Mellish. And when she told Nick that she was to be my guest the following week, he stopped all work and waxed enthusiastic in praise of his former teacher.

On the day of my party, I received a handsome corsage of orchids and the enclosed card read,

"From your former pupil,  
Nick."

I was deeply touched by his sweet remembrance of me and most happy to know that he had found an artistic outlet for his clever hands. But I shall always feel that poverty crushed a great talent and deprived us of a first-rate portrait painter.

In an old diary I came across the following letter which Nick had sent me years before!

"Dear Miss Flannery:

I am glad because I see you in very good health. I am sorry when some morning I cannot see you, I am afraid because I think you sick and my head said many think.

But I not like when in the class I see another teacher, when I come and see you I said very good, when I see another teacher my heart are death.

I do not like nothink else she doing all thinks are for me bad, I don't know why. I see you kindness of all boys in the class, you make us laugh, you give us work to do all day. You tell the nice stories and some other thinks. In you class I learn the good lessons all thinks you do I like and because that I love you very much.

I shall never forget what you have done at me, it is a very great satisfaction for me, you are very good beautiful teacher, I am beside myself with joy. If you knew how happy I am, when I was in Italy who would have thought it? I should never have suspected it, come in America and find the good teacher like you a thousand thanks for the good advise you gave me to do. I am very much obliged to you, I am quite to do all thinks do you one. Because you really too kind and I can find never same gang. I hop you to have a happy all you life, that is what I like, I thanking you for the good mark you gave me in the report card.

But I wish you to have a very good time and happiest Easter with you and your family.

I can find word for thanking you to the kindness you to had used at me when I coming at your house.

I am,

Your loving pupil,

NICK

Please look that letter and looks like same when the horse jump jump on the street and same I jumped me in the word of the letter."

In the same diary there were some questions and answers which I include here:

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

A boy named Tony, about eleven years old, took a nap almost every day after the lunch hour. I said to him, "Why do you fall asleep during the writing lesson?"

"I tell you teach," he said. "On the lunch my father gives us all one cup of wine. Some days I hang around until he goes out the house, then I snatch another cup. Always when I take two cups, I get drunk in the head and I have to sleep!"

"Do you get drunk any other days?"

"No, only on Sundays. Lots of peoples come by our house on Sunday. They drink wine and when they go home, I take the wine what's left in the glasses."

"Does your father know that you are drunk?"

"No, he's drunk too, he don't knows nuthin and sleeps on the bed."

*Question:* What is the plural of the word loaf?

*Answer:* The plural is loafers.

*Question:* Why were you not at school yesterday?

*Answer:* My brother came from Sing Sing and I had to wash the floor.

*Question:* Why did you have to wash the floor?

*Answer:* My brother is getting married and we made a party.

*Question:* Did you have a nice time at the party?

*Answer:* Yes, we all got drunk and I fell asleep.

*Question:* Why were you absent yesterday?

*Answer:* Our block was warring (making war) the Henry Streets so I had to stay home and help my gang.

*Question:* Why were you absent yesterday?

*Answer:* There was a dead on our block and I stayed home to hear the music.

*Question:* (After a lesson in nature study) Does any boy know what a field mouse is?

*Answer:* Yes, we got lots of them under my bed.

*Question:* Why were you so late this morning?

*Answer:* When I got up I seen a cloud, so I put on my old pantses (pants). When I came down, I seen the sun, so I went back and put on my new pantses.

*Question:* Why were you absent yesterday?

*Answer:* I had to go and get my old man, he was drunk in a hallway.

*Question:* Why were you absent yesterday?

*Answer:* The banana ship came in and I went with some other guys.

*Question:* Why are you not doing your writing lesson?

*Answer:* My fingers are sore, and I can't hold the pencil. The thumb and first two fingers on this boy's right hand were bruised, torn and bleeding. He had been sewing buttons on pants till two o'clock that morning (sweat-shop work). At six in the morning he had carried a bundle of the pants to the factory. I asked if he had had any breakfast. "Yes," he said, "my mother was too busy sewing on the pantses, so she gave me two cents and I had coffee and a roll by the bake-shop."

## GAETANO

Gaetano was twelve years old. He was pretty, if that adjective can apply to a boy. He had the warm beige Italian coloring, lovely eyes, glorious black hair and dazzling white teeth. His smile, when he deigned to use it, would open all doors. But he usually wore a sulky, let-me-alone expression. He was an almost incurable truant and was to be left behind again at promotion time. I established a friendship with him and often asked him to stay after school for a few minutes, to help me. He began to attend classes with quite a degree of regularity and one day I was distressed to find his place vacant. He was absent for two days and on the third day, when he appeared, dirty and dishevelled, he was plainly contrite.

After school, I put my arm around him and begged him to tell me the truth of his absence and I would forgive all. He hung his head for a moment, then raising it, he looked in my eyes and said, "I couldn't come, because my mother she laid a baby! I had to stay home and do the washing. We live on the fourth floor and the water is in the yard. I had to carry many pails to make the clothes clean. My mother is alone now, I only came today because I thought you would be mad at me." This news and the blunt way in which it was delivered, shocked me and tore at my heart strings.

I kissed the little fellow and told him that he was a good kind son and together we left to pay a visit to his mother. On the way we stopped at a push-cart and I bought three oranges. It was well that I did, for the mother had not eaten since morning.

The apartment had two rooms, one of fair size with one window and a smaller room with no window. The larger room was the living room, with stove, chairs and table and a large, high Italian bed. In this bed was the mother and the new baby. There were four other children of whom Gaetano was the oldest.

The mother was a pleasant soul and with Gaetano as interpreter,

her broken English and my smattering of Italian we had a comfortable visit. She averred that her husband was a good man and she had no complaint. But work was dull, he was a painter and could only get a few days work each week. She herself was not strong and without Gaetano's help would never have been able to manage. This of course explained his truancy.

While sitting there, I noticed that there were three large gunny sacks spread on the floor under the mother's bed. Gaetano escorted me downstairs and I asked him about the gunny sacks. He said that he and his brother slept there and the other two children slept in the small bed in the other room.

I sent Gaetano for a quart of milk and saw to it that his mother had a quart a day for a week. Gaetano picked up in his studies, was promoted with my class and began to use his heavenly smile.

In later years I heard that he had been sent to a reformatory for *bad* boys!

#### PASQUALE

Pasquale was about eleven when I first knew him, but he looked about nine. He was short, with tiny hands and feet, and his head and quizzical expression were those of an old man. He had tubercular glands on the left side of his neck. They had diseased rapidly and had been operated twice so that he had to favor that side of his neck and carried his head on one side. He wore a dirty white bandage around the neck.

He was a fine scholar, a gentle lovable child, and had a grand sense of humor. He called the boys to task for using bad language in my presence and for some reason, perhaps his infirmity, they all looked up to him. He was innately fine and we became dear friends.

The good boys often stayed after school to pick up papers and wash the blackboards. It was an excuse on my part, to talk with

them and learn of home conditions. Pasquale often escorted me to the elevated train, and was there too, to meet me in the morning. When a couple of other gallants joined him one day, he waived them to the rear, so we could walk alone and have our tête-à-tête.

Pasquale was an only child. His widowed mother worked in a rag shop across from our school. Her salary was four dollars a week. She could have earned four dollars and twenty-five cents if she picked rags by gaslight. But Pasquale said she preferred to pick in the daylight. They lived in one room, a fourth floor, rear, on Cherry Street.

One day Pasquale failed to appear and after the noon recess the boys told me that he was drunk and some boys were pulling him around in his little wagon. The wagon was a soap box with four wheels, which he had made. The next day Pasquale met me as usual and on the way to school he said—"I have ashamed to myself—yesterday when I was coming to school a woman asked me to buy her some wine. It was an Italian fiesta." They have them without end. He took the pail to the wine shop and bought her ten cents worth of wine, whereupon she gave him a drink. The other neighbors called him in and he made several trips to the wine shop, each time receiving a glass of wine. By noon he felt dizzy in the head and could not walk so he took out his wagon and some "guys" pulled him around. They sang Italian folk songs, many of which I was beginning to know, and had a lovely day. A banana ship was coming in so they went down to the ship and made a big haul, before the cops chased them. They used to make similar raids on all fruit ships and at Fulton Market.

Pasquale missed me so terribly over the week-ends that he suggested that he come to my house some Saturday afternoon. I gave him my address, which was on West 64th Street and thought no more about it. To my complete consternation he appeared at our flat one Saturday afternoon about two o'clock. I had planned some

activity for that afternoon but I threw my plans to the wind when I saw dear little Pasquale. He had walked from Cherry Street to West 64th Street. Aunt Kate gave him a sandwich and a glass of milk, although he denied that he was hungry. I played and sang his Italian folk songs and then we sang them together. In days to come I was to sing in the pure Italian language, but just now I was singing the complicated Neapolitan dialect.

Pasquale told me interesting neighborhood incidents and I in turn entertained by showing him pictures in the magazines. I dismissed him with carfare and a kiss and I cannot say who was the happier of the two.

That visit led to many others, but the date was set in advance. Other boys came with him, I providing the carfares on Friday afternoon and Pasquale was custodian of the money. When Pasquale was nearing thirteen the tubercular glands took on a serious aspect. I had taken him to two clinics but the news was discouraging and with Miss George to help me, we tried to place him in a home for tubercular children.

One day when he was absent from illness I called for an escort to take me to his house, after school. My escort waited for me and two other boys dashed ahead to tell Pasquale of my coming. It was a bitter cold day, and there had been a heavy snowstorm. I climbed three flights, through pitch-dark halls, terrifying in themselves, and opened the door on an unforgettable picture. Pasquale was burning papers in the little stove, to give the effect of a fire. The room was freezing cold and he had on his ragged overcoat and a cap. He removed the cap when I entered.

There was one bed in the room, Pasquale slept with his mother. There was also *one* small window looking into the arches of the bridge, and it was *nailed* to keep out the cold!

I had given Pasquale two white mice, in a little cage and he was crazy about them. I asked where they were and he told me quite

casually that the black rats ate them one night. The damp cold of that cheerless room, the abject poverty, the invalid boy and the hopelessness of it all tore me to pieces. I sent the boys home and waited for Pasquale's mother to come home. Her rag-picking ended at four so we had not long to wait. The mother was about fifty, but hard work and untold misery had worn out her body and she looked like an old dwarf. She spoke no English but with Pasquale as interpreter I made her understand that we wanted to send him away to be cured. The poor soul cried and took on to a degree. Pasquale was a good boy, all she had left in this world and she would be lonesome without him. I convinced her that his absence would be of short duration and he would return well and happy. So she agreed to let him go.

There was so damned much red tape connected with the whole thing—there often is in worthy cases, that nearly two months elapsed before we placed him. He went to a home, and if memory again serves me correctly, it was on the outskirts of New York, not far from Yonkers.

I saw him one year later, he had grown tall, put on weight and was nicely dressed. But the disease had made its successful inroads and he died at the age of fifteen.

Soon after assuming my duties at the school, I learned how these poor Italians conducted a funeral.

One day, during class period, I heard the blatant sound of a brass band. They were playing the Chopin funeral march. I supposed that a wealthy Italian was being buried and made inquiries among the boys.

"No," said Rocco, "he ain't rich, he's a poor guy. He works by the bake shop."

"How can he pay for a band of music?"

"I don't know, everybody has to have a band on a funeral. If you no get a band, people talk about you."

"What do they say?"

"They said that you are poor and no love the deads, you get bad luck too, if you not kind to the deads."

One morning, when I was nearing the school, I saw one of these funeral processions. The first two carriages were laden with floral pieces and there was the inevitable band of music. Pasquale was my escort that morning and I said to him, "Pasquale, that must be a rich man who is being buried, he has so many flowers."

"No," said Pasquale, "he's a cheap guy. He got stabbed the other night and they found his body in a hallway. The flowers ain't real, they're fake flowers, made of paper and wax. You loan them from the undertaker. If you're poor you can only get one or two pieces, but if you're a rich guy, you can have all you want."

"But you said this man was not rich, who paid for the flowers?"

"Well, you see, his gang was sad for him and they put up the dough for the funeral."

"Was this man married, Pasquale?"

"Yes, his poor wife is screaming and going crazy. She was hitting her head against the wall and my mother and some other women stayed by her house. She say that she gonna jump in the grave with him."

"Do you think she will?"

"No, lots of times they say that on funerals and then they don't jump."

## V

### MEN, MUSIC, AND MARRIAGE

FOR ME, there were two musical events of the winter and they both took me to exalted heights. A kindly teacher invited me to hear Mme. Schumann-Heink in song recital at Carnegie Hall. We climbed hundreds of steps, it seemed to me, and found our seats in the center of the top balcony. There was a sea of faces below me and seating capacity having been exhausted, there were three rows of chairs on the platform stage, to take care of the overflow. What an audience and what an artist! But I am sure now, that I received the musical content of that program in a rather passive mood. My musical concepts were so limited that the deep moving songs of Schubert and Brahms fell upon unprepared soil. That soil had yet to be plowed, fertilized and cultivated. And when I later studied my German lieder under the guidance of the beloved Richard Epstein, I was just beginning to turn over the soil.

One day when I had brought to my lesson a poorly prepared song of Brahms, Mr. Epstein delivered himself of his anger. He told me that Schubert, Schumann and Brahms were not paid for in money, and that only arduous study and deep devotion would ever enable me to commune with the great masters. I heard the grand old Schumann-Heink many times after that when I had progressed to the point of reverence for her artistry.

The next peek into great music was an invitation to the Metropolitan Opera. My friend Marie had a beau, a fine Italian fellow, to whom all good music was food. He had bought three seats for a Saturday matinee and we were to hear Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*.

Of course I was elated at the thought of going to the Opera House, but totally unaware of the musical debauch that awaited me. We took an elevator to the top gallery and had seats in the second row on the side. If you are not familiar with that upper horseshoe (not the Golden Horseshoe), let me tell you that to see the stage much craning of the neck is required. Beauty experts could well advise their worried clients to make frequent trips to these side seats. For a three-hour exercise of neck twisting and bending would be most helpful in warding off "that crêpey throat."

The lovely old red plush and gold of the interior of the house, the brilliant lights, the grand proscenium and the tuning up of the orchestra were the beginnings of many sweet pulsations to follow. And when that noble orchestra did play, and when Caruso and Lina Cavalieri sang, and the lovely story unfolded, I traveled with them into a dream world.

Our escort remarked on my quiet mood, after the performance. I could only say that it was all too much. The musical feast had been overwhelming and I must take time to digest and assimilate all the beauty I had heard and seen. The emotional disturbance which followed was almost a neurosis. I had tasted the nectar and seen the Gods, but to enter Olympus and become even a small part of that heavenly place, was just unthinkable.

When I returned to New York in September I went to a very decent pension on East 19th Street. By sharing the third floor back with another girl, I had to pay only seven dollars board. The girl whose name was Luella had been in New York for three years. Her complete sophistication was almost baffling to me. And I know that my provincial and naïve manner was equally disconcerting to her.

Above all things, she wondered at my getting up Sunday mornings to go to church. I still attended Mass and was afraid of eternal damnation if I should miss it. But under her tutelage I began to

slip and many Sundays I turned over in bed and made excuses to myself. I was seeing so much Hell in my work that I had new ideas concerning it. A light was dawning upon me and I felt that Hell was a state of being rather than a permanent abiding place.

The third floor front of our boarding house was occupied by an actress named Fifi. She was in vaudeville and singing in the Proctor Circuit which then embraced many theaters. Fifi loved good music and whenever we had time we were practicing. Fifi would sing some lovely old English classics and some simple French songs, to my accompaniment. In return for my accompaniments, she gave me a few vocal exercises to help pull my voice out of my throat, where it seemingly longed to stay. She also gave me passes to the theaters where she had appearances.

With a little vocal coaching and some new clothes, Fifi presumed that I could go far in the theater. She knew, in fact, some interesting old men who would make the pathway very easy for me. I loved Fifi, who was about thirty when I was twenty. I confessed to her that I was a virgin and could not part with my purity even for a career in vaudeville. The dear understanding soul advised me like a mother and took me under her wing. She told me to protect my little box, as she called it, have a good time, but keep my legs crossed! And it all sounded so easy.

It was at a party in a bachelor apartment, given by some of Fifi's friends, that my eyes were opened to the fast world. When Fifi introduced me, she announced in loud and positive tones that I was a virgin. I blushed and nearly died of shame, but she explained in undertones, that it had to be handled that way. The only virgins in that gathering were in niches on the walls, and were used for decorative purposes. So the men in the party had warnings—hands off.

My dress was a plain yellow *crêpe de Chine*. I was tall and slender and it fitted me perfectly. I was told that I looked dramatic and

not unlike Eleanor Duse. Youth had such power and charm that among other things, it can lend grace and beauty to cheap clothes. In later years, when I was fair, fat and forty, I spent many weary hours trying to get that same desired effect. I visited Paquin, Worth, Jenny, Lucien Lelong and other famous coutouriers in Paris. I had long tedious fittings, alterations and more fittings, and dragged the clothes across the Atlantic and through the Customs. I flaunted the expensive trappings on every possible occasion, and I feel that Helen Hokinson may have almost had my type in mind when she contributes her marvelous drawings to the *New Yorker Magazine*.

At the party I played the piano and sang, was gay and tried to enter into the wild ideas of fun. After all, I had had no debut, formal or informal, so I told myself that I was at least breaking into some society and I must make the best of it.

The second social event was to be a very important one, so said Fifi, and elaborate preparations were in order. A well-known and later a famous artist was to throw a dinner party in his studio apartment and Luella and I were included. We had not met our host and as a matter of fact, we never did meet him!

Fifi hinted that I really should have a new evening dress and through the courtesy of Oppenheim Collins I did buy one, for that shop had sent a notice to the effect that a school teacher might open an account there. I also bought new evening slippers and a pair of crêpe de Chine drawers. I want to state that I had no thought of inviting trouble but I was beginning to feel humiliated with my flannels and in case of a surprise attack I at least would not look like Little Orphan Annie.

The apartment was a duplex and the studio was one of the most beautifully furnished rooms I had ever seen. I made acquaintance there with things that I had only read about in books: paintings of the old masters, exquisite marbles, tapestries, priceless antiques and rugs which I thought too fine to walk upon.

The long handsome table, such as was used in monasteries, was set in a corner of the room. And the table appointments were again a thing of beauty—the Venetian cloth, silver, crystal and china such as I had seen only in Fifth Avenue windows. I had had no background upon which to cultivate beauty and why did I always recognize it and why did it reach out to be friends with me? I do not know. I only do know that I have always been drawn to beauty. I want to touch things of beauty. I suspect that clerks in the smart shops have often eyed me with suspicion when I run my fingers over a fine porcelain, or feel an exquisite brocade, or handle a Lalique bottle. Touching things brings them into closer contact.

The motley crowd who had been bidden to this feast were mostly intoxicated at the time of our arrival. One pompous gentleman announced that our host had gone to bed soused, as he expressed it, and would rise to greet us later in the evening. He never did appear.

And so I wandered around among the art treasures oblivious to the drunks and bumping into waiters who looked at me in awe when I refused a drink. Champagne corks were popping with the rapidity of a machine gun. I could not manage champagne at that time, it tasted like vinegar, but I did take some sherry, to be a "good fellow." I had no taste for alcohol and the word guzzle was not yet in my vocabulary.

My contribution to the party was, naturally, my music; in fact I think it was the reason for my being included. I accompanied Fifi when she sang. I sang also, to my own accompaniment and later played for the dancing. I call it dancing, but what with the limping around and occasional spills to the floor, I think it was a preview and forerunner of our now famous Marathon Dance.

The evening bored on and nostalgia crept in, I noticed that several guests, including Luella had disappeared. Thinking they had gone home, I suggested to Fifi that we make our adieux.

She said the party was not yet breaking up, although for me it had already collapsed, and she urged me to stay on. At intervals, the guests whom I had missed, began to drift back into the studio. They looked dishevelled, placid and satisfied. And from subsequent remarks, some flippanant and some obscene, the reluctant truth dawned upon me. This place was an artistic and luxurious brothel and the absentee guests had gone to the various bedrooms, to engage in a little strip teasing via the mattress!

Now I can write of this orgy with complete calm, but its effect on me at that time was shocking and unforgettable. Fifi sent me home with the most harmless man in the party, a dull bromide. He slept in the cab, and only touched my hand when we said good-night. He said that he liked me but that I would never have cause to fear him. His magnanimity had a pragmatic basis. Long years of sex indulgence had rendered him impotent and now his only weakness was liquor.

When I undressed that night, I knelt down to say my prayers. I had been saying them silently in bed, because the first night that I had knelt down, Luella laughed at me and I have always dreaded ridicule. I prayed that God would keep me pure in heart and give me understanding and tolerance for my fellow creatures.

Luella came home in the wee hours and never heard me when I left for Mass on Sunday morning. I still went to church. I refused other subsequent invitations and closed the door to these interpretations of a grand evening. After all, I had been dubbed a prude and a frozen turnip, and all possibilities of making me a proselyte were hopeless.

At Christmas time, Luella received a present of diamond garters and a handsome fur coat. The presents came from one of the chief libertines of that set. Fifi was installed in a furnished apartment and had a maid to boot. I visited the apartment once. She said we would be alone for dinner. We were not alone. One of the Dodo's

whom I had met, was acting as host. He had brought a present for each of us, a bottle of Houbigant's Ideal perfume. I was thrilled to have it, for my poor nose had only known the smell of Jockey Club, and Lily-of-the-Valley—what inane scents they are!

It took no problem in calculus to work out the fact that Fifi was being provided for—a kept woman. Here was a woman whom I admired and loved and now I could not respect her. It affected me terribly. All my moral senses were in revolt but still I kept her in my heart. I tried to reason it out and told myself that it was easy to understand the life of a street prostitute. That girl, often ignorant and sometimes even illiterate, had to ply her trade for food, clothes and shelter and for her I could feel pity.

But a woman of lovely character and Fifi, was that, with a splendid equipment of beauty, brains, culture and talent—what about her! Well I could not work it out then, and now the problem does not interest me.

About the time these extravagant orgies were being given I read an account of the formal debut of an American girl. She was the daughter of one of our wealthy families and the papers carried headlines and pictures describing the elegance of this event. The debut was said to have cost about seventy thousand dollars. My mental processes were now in a state of chaos. By nature I have always been a gay and happy individual but I would lapse into fits of melancholy because I could not adjust things. Why, I thought, should seventy thousand dollars be spent on a debutante's coming-out party and my boys downtown were without food, clothing and heat? And why should one baby open its eyes to a world of beauty and wealth and another baby face life with a handicap of such extreme poverty that even existence was a struggle? The whole scheme of things seemed wrong.

My religious training had taught me that there was only one true faith, the Roman Catholic. And a good Catholic who lived and

died in his or her faith, went on to the eternal bliss of heaven. I was never taught that Protestants and Jews were denied heaven, but if there is only one truth faith, I gathered by inference that all those outside of that faith were unfortunate indeed and likely to be forever lost.

How could I reconcile myself to such a thought when my daily work brought me in contact with both Protestants and Jews whose lives were clean and whose work among God's poor was indeed Christ-like. For these good teachers gave of their time and of their miserable salaries to better the pathetic conditions in our neighborhood and they saw to it that more than a little sunshine found its way into very dark lives. Surely these good people were living the parable of the Good Samaritan, for they labored without regard to race, creed or color.

I believe that admirable woman, the late Lillian Wald, with her Henry Street Settlement, was the only organized social worker in lower New York. Today, and thanks to Miss Wald's courage and leadership, social research is organized and salaried. Many of our leading colleges offer special courses along that line. But at that time the work was mostly voluntary and arose from the simple desire of one human being to help a less fortunate one.

The age of twenty-two found me in a maelstrom. I wanted to be a good Catholic, but I couldn't believe; I wanted to alleviate extreme want and poverty, but I was powerless to do that. I wanted to sing more than anything in the world, but no small ray of light seemed to point the way.

And so I drifted and while drifting I kept up my piano work and spent my happiest moments in reading. I delved into philosophy, ancient and modern; wallowed in the naughty French romances and read with interest and confusion the story of Buddha, Brahma and Confucius.

Then time, with its kindly and restorative powers, brought me a

period of adjustment. I emerged from my state of dilemma and was much the better for it. I was a tolerant Christian, and not a bigoted Catholic. I ceased to dissertate and was willing to live and let live. As for my music, I felt that some day I could fulfill some part of my longing to sing. But that must wait and my own desire and will would keep the spark alive.

Of course there were beaux who came and went to the number perhaps and sometimes the variety of Heinz's 57. They were skinny and fat, rich and poor, educated and stupid and among the cavalcade I did not draw one who was interested in beautiful music. Beethoven could have been a plumber and Brahms a shoemaker for all these lads knew or cared. And Grand Opera was just high-falutin music, no one really liked it.

I was taken to the leading restaurants and the good plays of the season and I paid with the usual good-night kisses in the doorway. In those days no heavy necking parties were in order. A girl was wooed and not "propositioned" as I understand is often the case today. But the tempo of life has changed in the last thirty-five years and our young men and women have had to meet that change. And it is not for me to condemn their utterly frank conversations on sex and sex-adjustment. It is for me to wonder and try to understand.

When one of my gallants approached the marriage subject or proposed directly, I gently put the skids under him and eased him out of the picture. I was not averse to marriage but I was not the least bit in love. So, with the instinct of the gold diggers, I kept on my list those young men most likely to contribute to my entertainment.

I confided to Marie that I had definite qualifications for my future husband and could wait until such a man appeared. The husband was to be a college man and for some silly reason, I preferred Yale. He was to be rich, for I wanted to travel and have smart clothes. He was to be Catholic preferably, so that religious

controversies might be avoided. On the question of good looks, I was willing to compromise, and balance appearance with character.

At the close of the school term, after much budgeting and planning, Marie and I decided upon our first vacation. Asbury Park, New Jersey, was our choice. The old reliable firm of Oppenheim, Collins & Company was again helpful. We dashed down to that shop and replenished our sketchy wardrobes with a few summer dresses and new bathing suits. These clothes were charged and paid for the following September when school opened. We were always just about one jump ahead of the sheriff!

About thirty years ago Asbury Park, it is true, was no Newport, nor Le Touquet and neither had it reached a commonplace level. The location was ideal, the beach one of the finest, there were many first class hotels and smart restaurants, and beautiful inland drives. The nearby towns of Long Branch, Deal, Allenhurst, and Elberon boasted of some of the finest homes on the Jersey coast.

Marie and I had carefully combed the Sunday papers and finally engaged rooms at the modest Hotel Belmont in Asbury Park. We arrived on a lovely July afternoon and seated on the porch of the hotel were two young men about our own age. One of them was quite good looking and the other disturbingly handsome. I married that handsome man and Marie became the wife of his friend. And so had the Sunday papers and Asbury Park arranged our lives!

The stage had been set for our romance, the lovely boardwalk brilliantly lighted at night, Arthur Pryor's first class band, the moaning beauty of the summer sea and a full moon to boot was too much to combat and I walked up to my neck in love. There was an inner fight at first, and for this reason. The object of my delirium, Jay, while possessed of infinite charm and vibrant personality, had a limited education, no money, good looks to spare, and was a gorgeous pagan!

My Apollo remembered that at the age of eleven he had been

dragged to a Methodist Church and duly baptized, since when, to him, a church was just a public building exempt from taxes.

How about my plans for a rich husband, smart clothes, travel and a thousand little luxuries, which I had always craved? Was I to turn my back on these possibilities and face housework, which I loathed, raise babies, wash diapers, (I had seen so many hundreds of them at home) perhaps take a fleeting trip to Coney Island and call it a lifetime—by all means no! This love urge which was catching up with me must be gotten under control.

The daytime gave me leisure to think and I could make my head work. But evening, with its attendant lure and the presence of the Charming One, left me helpless and the heart proceeded to dictate. I knew that the department of kisses boasted many varieties but I had to come to Asbury Park to learn and know the lingering swooning kiss from which at times resuscitation seems doubtful.

After two weeks of gaiety and delirious happiness, I wilted into acquiescence and became engaged to Jay. Ecstasy had thrown reason to the winds, my heart whispered that this was a great love and that I would do well to heed its call.

Our marriage, which followed one year later, brought me eighteen years of complete happiness, with adequate wealth, travel, and an engagement with The Metropolitan Opera Company—all the things I had ever hoped for. Of course we passed through many vicissitudes but there was a huge fund of love to draw upon, we were both ambitious and courage was our byword. At first, this courage was fed by me to him, and later it was I who needed to be bolstered and Jay was ever there—his loving arms a heavenly oasis.

Our first apartment was a four-room one, on West 136th Street near Riverside Drive. It was a walk-up and my initial view of it was disconcerting to say the least. The paint was cherry red, and in the dining room there hung a huge electric monstrosity, made of iron and colored glass! At very little expense, we put on white

paint, three coats being necessary to hide the vile cherry color. The hideous electric fixture was taken down and in its place was installed a lovely rose silk shade, made by myself. A carpenter was called in and book shelves were made for either side of the mantel. And after much happy planning and scheming the apartment became not only liveable, but cozy.

The problem of a piano was a serious one. Jay was an automobile salesman and worked for a small salary and commissions. His earnings sufficed to keep us going, with an allowance for entertainment and a small amount to be saved each month. I was in charge of the exchequer and planned accordingly.

We had an old used Franklin automobile, the type with the big round hood. It was built so high and moved so slowly that we could look into people's houses and practically see what they were having for dinner! We loved the car, so that had to stay.

A piano was a necessity and in order to arrange that and keep the car, I elected to do my own housework, with the help of a laundress, who would come once a week. A used upright piano was arranged for and the love-nest was ready. I had never done any housework nor cooked a meal but there is nothing sweeter than love's young dream and in the first throes of it, nothing seemed irksome.

My laundress was an Irishwoman, Mrs. X., and the mother of four small children. Her husband was a street-cleaner and an inebriate to a degree. Mrs. X. was a devout Catholic, a good mother and washed and ironed six days in the week. Her husband drank most of his salary, so it was she who kept the little family together.

One morning, she came to my apartment, pale, frightened, and completely upset. She had been to a five o'clock morning Mass, at the mission in her church. Now a mission in a church means this. At stated intervals, a priest or priests of another order, come to visit that particular church. These priests, Jesuits, Dominicans, or what-

ever the order may be, are superlatively informed in Church doctrine, and are usually high-powered orators. Their work is to bring the wayward back to the fold, and to exhort those in the fold, to a higher sense of Christian duty.

Mrs. X. said that on this particular morning, the preacher had delivered a sermon on the prevention of childbirth. Mrs. X. told me that the Reverend Father shook his fist at the congregation of women and threatened them that when they died, the children whom they had destroyed or refused to conceive, would rise up before them and cry for vengeance! One woman fainted and two women left the church. I pointed out to Mrs. X. that these women may have been conscience stricken, but I could see no reason for her pitiful disturbance. After all she had given four children to a man who could not support one. Mr. X. died the following year and three years later Mrs. X. followed him. Whatever her ailment was called, I say she died of hard work and long-suffering poverty.

Of course I was so ultra-smart that I arranged to have my family just when it pleased me. Jay argued that we should have two years of freedom and in that time we could save enough to provide for our first baby. For two years I dusted and swept and cooked, with time off each day for piano practice, and a period for singing.

My allowance for entertainment provided a few piano recitals, some concerts and occasional trips to the top balcony of the Metropolitan Opera House. I had never heard a German opera and one day I elected to treat myself to a hearing of Wagner's *Die Meistersinger*. Toscanini was the conductor and I believe that Freida Hempel sang Eva. The house was crowded and rather than stand I purchased the only unsalable seat left, an end chair in the first row of the top balcony. The box-office man was careful to explain that one could hear the opera quite well, but that this perch promised nothing in visual delight. And how correct he was! I looked directly down upon the heads of Maestro Toscanini and the or-

chestra players. The view of the stage was nil. In fact I was at a loss to explain the applause which broke in as the curtain was slowly lowered at the second act. It seems that the villagers in the little town of Nuremberg, go quietly into their houses, close the shutters and put out the lights. The street is deserted and in the sweet stillness a gorgeous moon rises slowly over the house-tops. And with the last lovely bars of the second act music, the peaceful town is bathed in moonlight. To me it is one of the most delightful scenic effects and leaves one with a definite nostalgia for Nuremberg. But I knew nothing about the scene, at this particular Saturday matinée.

And maybe it was better so, for what my ears had drunk in that afternoon was almost overpowering! My first hearing of that noble orchestration had exhausted my being and left me completely devitalized. It had also brought me to worship forever, at the shrine of Richard Wagner. Many years later, when I had resigned from the Opera Company, I returned to the little stage town of Nuremberg and sat in one of the little houses. My friend, Marion Telva, was singing a performance of Magdalena, who appears in the second act of *Die Meistersinger*. Instead of waiting for Marion in her dressing room, I sat on a bench in one of the dear little houses, and of course invisible to the audience. In the intervening years, I have crossed the ocean many times and strangely enough, I have never visited Germany. But the lingering strains of the orchestra and the lovely moon so carefully timed by the back-stage technicians, always brings again the longing to see Nuremberg. In the light of fast changing history, I can but vainly hope that Hitler and the Nazis will not have completely destroyed my dream of Germany.

When I first heard Enrico Caruso and Geraldine Farrar, in the same cast, was another unforgettable day. It was a Saturday matinée of Massenet's *Manon*. This time I had a seat in the same top balcony, but it was a seeing seat, third row center! I had practically

memorized the libretto and knew that I was in for an afternoon of keen delight. I had previously heard Caruso, and his Des Grieux in *Manon* was just one more beautiful portrait. I had thrilled to the point of goose-flesh, in the St. Sulpice scene, and had cried my full quota in the last act.

But Geraldine Farrar with her lovely voice, great art and devastating beauty was a revelation. She was to be then and forever after my pet prima donna and I joined the army of her devoted followers.

I once knew a woman who was a music lover. Her husband rather dull and prosaic, was not interested in love nor music. The lady inveigled her husband into hearing the new opera star, Maria Jeritza.

He suddenly liked opera, and, always when Jeritza sang! My friend's comments ran thus— "Let my husband go to see Jeritza as often as he pleases, it works out entirely to my interest. For when he returns from her spell, my boudoir takes on a new aura. And when the lights are turned out, and my husband becomes the vehement and passionate lover, I am grateful to Jeritza, if not thrilled by being her under-study!"

Another opera performance which projects itself upon my memory, was one of *La Bohème*, given at a matinée on Washington's Birthday, February 22, 1914 or 1915. When the morning paper announced *Bohème* with two stars, and my two idols, Caruso and Farrar, there was nothing for me to do, but hurry down for my family circle seat. I went one week in advance, took my place in the line, only to reach the box-office and learn that the family circle was sold out. I had heard *Bohème*, but never with such a Rudolfo and such a Mimi, so I made an instant decision to be among the standees.

On the morning of the matinée, I rose early, put my house in order, semi-prepared the evening meal and left my apartment about noon. I had never stood in line, but I knew that to obtain a choice

place inside the house, one had to be early. I planned to take lunch at a Schrafft restaurant near the Opera House, and be in my place in line about one o'clock. I went downtown by trolley and as the car passed 39th Street, I was amazed to see that the line was half-way around the Opera House. That meant no lunch, if I was to hear the opera, and I lost no time in taking my place among the outside standees.

The day was bitterly cold, but my enthusiasm was at high pitch and weather did not concern me. I was not in my place more than five minutes when a gentle snow began to fall. How lovely, I thought, it is just like the snow scene in the third act of *Bohème*. That scene was always very real to me and when Marcello would tighten his woolen scarf about his neck, and Mimi draw her little shawl across her shoulders, I too felt the chill of that winter scene.

A young lady took her place behind me in line and remarked on the weather, saying that it would probably be at least twenty minutes before the doors were opened. I suggested that the lady keep my place in line, while I dashed to a corner drug-store to regale myself with a hot malted-milk. This she agreed to do and asked me to buy for her two bars of Hershey's milk chocolate. This ardent opera-fan had likewise had no luncheon and she had come from New Jersey!

When the doors finally opened and I had shaken the snow from my clothes, I felt well rewarded, for I found a place at the brass rail, and down front. I had only viewed the auditorium from the gallery and now I was on the ground floor, near the orchestra, in good line with the stage and I would see the faces of Caruso and Farrar. It all seemed heavenly and indeed it was.

Caruso was an ideal Rudolfo and his outpouring of the lovely Puccini music was inspiring and entrancing. Farrar's sympathetic and adorable Mimi, remains an operatic portrait yet to be surpassed. I wept at her "Addio" and sobbed in the last act. And what with

hanging over the brass rail, and resting on the floor between the acts, I had a gorgeous time.

Of course I could scarcely walk for two days, I thought my limbs were paralyzed. But I learned then and there the status of the standee. And I decided that anyone eager and willing to stand for three and a half or four hours, is, regardless of other attributes, good or bad, a passionate lover of music.

Then dazed and emotionally drunk, I staggered home to prepare my husband's dinner! It was not an easy descent from these heights of ecstasy to the prosaic functions of the kitchen. I used to fear that one day the pendulum would swing too far, and in the wrong direction. But Jay's love had much in it of understanding and tolerance and I felt that together we could work out our lives. My own voice which my husband adored and my friends praised finely, was a lyric soprano. I sang with ease to an F. F sharp was pinched and G almost choked me. So my repertoire was kept within the range and I was always able to transpose my songs.

On rainy afternoons, I loved to go to the John Wanamaker piano salon. There were on exhibition many and various makes of baby grand pianos. I wandered among them and lovingly ran my fingers across the keys—what a tone, what splendid action, what heavenly joy to ever own one! A salesman, who had probably spotted me, induced me to sit down one day, and really try the piano. I did and I played the Chopin Waltz in C sharp minor. In spite of many compliments of my playing, and some snappy sales talk, I refused to give my name to the salesman. There was no sense in his putting me on a mailing list for grand pianos—we hadn't yet finished paying for my homely upright!

Adjacent to the piano salons was the auditorium, a sizable and artistic concert hall. There was almost always an interesting program, many of them were musical. Mr. Alexander Russell was the director. He is now Dr. Alexander Russell. On the musical after-

noons there was a concert given by the pupils and artist pupils of some representative vocal teacher. The programs were commendable and many a young artist first tried her wings in the Wanamaker Auditorium.

These little concerts left me richer in musical knowledge and added to my ever growing and passionate desire to sing beautiful music and to sing it in the artistic manner.

Our two years of freedom, as we called it, was at an end, we planned to settle down and raise our family. I thought that four children would be plenty, two boys and two girls. Our bank balance was small, but Jay's earning capacity had increased and we wanted to have our children while we were both young. There was almost a year of waiting and watching, a profound yearning for motherhood, followed by disappointment and finally came the realization that a pregnancy with me seemed very doubtful. I visited the department stores and handled the adorable baby clothes, I picked out a sweet bassinette and refused to kill the hope within me. Surely, I who loved and worshiped children would one day feel my own baby's arms around my neck. But my womb was never to know the sweet throb of a young life. And I believe that the only real envy I have ever known, was when one of my friends would confide to me, that she was again pregnant. You may say that God punished me for interfering with nature's plans, that I was barren, or my husband sterile—I only know that I felt incomplete.

Boredom, which has always terrified me, was beginning to creep into my life. Housework with its monotonous dusting the same furniture, washing the same dishes over and over until I wanted to smash them, had never had an appeal, and now it was fast becoming drudgery. About this time, Jay had come out first in a salesman's contest. He received an increase in salary and a sizable bonus check. We were elated and in his usual unselfish way, he

decided that we should have a new car, a used Pierce-Arrow. I must have a maid, her salary to be twenty-five dollars a month.

The new car idea delighted me, for the old concrete-mixer in which we had been riding was beginning to give more trouble than pleasure. The poor car had passed through her reincarnation and was now a bucking bronco. I saw more than one smile of derision cast in our direction and humiliation was complete when Jay tried to maneuver the machine into line before the entrance to some smart restaurant. So, a newer vintage of automobile was much to my liking. But the idea of a maid of all work presented a new problem—what was I to do with my time? I knew, and it didn't take long to make the decision, that I would accept the stupidity of housework, eliminate a maid and take vocal lessons!

With his never-failing desire to make me happy Jay agreed that I should have the extra twenty-five dollars a month and I was to give this arrangement one year's trial.

I had already joined the chorus of the New York Oratorio Society and reported for rehearsal every Monday night. The rehearsals were held at Carnegie Hall, about ninety blocks from our apartment on Riverside Drive. And no rain, snow, blizzard or invitation kept me from rehearsal. My sight reading was being perfected and I was familiar with all the great oratorios. This marvelous training was to serve me well in the future and unknowingly I was adding to my concert repertoire.

I was familiar with the names of some famous vocal teachers, but their fees were entirely beyond the five dollars a lesson which I had elected to pay. So I placed myself in the hands of a Mr. B. at that time a well-known conductor in New York City. This was my first mistake, for although Mr. B. was a brilliant musician and a splendid coach, he was never a vocal teacher.

To my way of thinking there is an overwhelming number of charlatans in the vocal teaching profession. Conductors, pianists,

accompanists, and organists, desirous of adding to income, accept pupils for voice production and most often with resulting disastrous effect on the voice.

To place a voice, build it tone by tone and bring that voice to the place where it can undertake and sustain a vocal career is no small accomplishment. We have had in the past, we now have in the present and we shall have in the future many great teachers whose knowledge and equipment justify the right to teach voice production. But for every one of these elect, we surely have dozens who are unfitted for the task and they should be driven from the temple.

Let us pass by the student of ordinary voice and limited talent. Such a one would probably, in any case, be relegated to vocal oblivion. But what about the student with real talent and a voice of promise, how will he or she fare in the labyrinth of bad instruction? The chances are all against that student and either his or her own common sense or some element of luck must quickly motivate for salvation. Otherwise the student is so far sunk in the abyss, that rescue comes too late. Many a potential Lily Pons and a Richard Crooks have passed in and out of so-called vocal studies in this and other countries. And after seasons of study, very often accompanied by privation, the once hopeful aspirant finds himself or herself at the end of the road. The voice has been damaged, sometimes irreparably, and unhappily you cannot buy vocal cords as easily as you shop for strings for the violin or cello. The funds for further study are exhausted and the student with heartache and frustration turns his thoughts to another channel. It is true that he or she may find a happiness in some new road and, possibly, social or financial success. And perhaps the world is more liveable because many would-be singers are silenced early!

My point has only to do with the possible artists from whom we have never heard, those who died an early death in the studios of dishonest and nefarious teachers.

## VI

### *A VOICE IN THE ENSEMBLE*

I HAVE NEVER had a career, for that word seems to mean a life-work and one that has been conspicuous. My life-work has mostly been doing what I pleased and having a good time doing it. I have been at times conspicuous, but, happily that has not been in print, so we will skip it!

But I did sing for seven seasons at the Metropolitan Opera House and I also touched light opera and concert and loved every minute of it. Starting late as I did, that happy phase of my life could never have materialized had I not been in the right vocal hands.

After one season with Mr. B. I became unhappy, I felt that I was making no progress. With the usual loyalty which the pupil feels for the teacher, it was difficult to part from him. So I made a white lie (black if you insist) and told Mr. B. that I was going to discontinue my vocal work.

The hunt for a new teacher was interesting and indeed illuminating. I found out that the ten dollar teacher might accept five dollars, the five dollar teacher would compromise for three, and the three dollar teacher had a sliding scale which stopped at whatever she could get. Later I understood this bargaining and it was explained thus—a smart teacher realizes that the urge to hear oneself sing is not easily destroyed. He knows that if you exit from his studio, it is only to enter another one and that sooner or later you are bound to be had. So he figures that your pittance will help with his overhead, and why send the money to a competitive teacher?

But in the search there were two outstanding quacks who remain

in memory. One who advertised himself as Professor A., was a florid bald-headed German. The title Professor should have warned me but his flowery and promising advertisements lured me to his studio. I paid five dollars for my audition and that five was to be applied on lessons if I studied with the Professor. I sang two songs, he accompanied me, and he promptly told me that my voice was beautiful and like latent gold. I was all on the wrong vocal track, he would set me right in a short space of time and introduce me to the waiting world! It did not sound kosher, but I did inquire as to how he would begin my instructions. He told me that I had a lazy diaphragm and then he proceeded to illustrate. He stood me against a wall in the room and pressing his huge hand on my diaphragm, which muscle is just above the belt, he bade me take a deep breath. Holding that breath I was to push his hand away, by the power of my diaphragm. This I could not do and with no little derision he said he would illustrate just what strength and control was measured up in *his* diaphragm. Professor stood against the wall and asked me to hold three books against *his* diaphragm. With one deep breath, he pushed them all to the floor!

I thought it was a good trick, but somehow I could not connect it with beautiful singing. Professor said that he had some pupils who had become so adept at book tossing, that they could lie on the floor and with one strong movement of the diaphragm throw a book into the air.

It is a great pity that I did not hit him below the belt, when I had a chance, for he was a fakir. However, I later read in the papers that he had passed on to his reward. I often wondered, did his tricky diaphragm collapse, or did one of his pupils murder him?

Madame B. advertised that she was a maker of singers and her studio was in the Metropolitan Opera House building. My imagination ran riot and in my inane stupidity I thought that Madame B. would probably have close connections with the powers that be in

the Opera House. That could mean that Madame could pass me into a performance and even possibly introduce me to one of the artists. I made an appointment for an audition and was much relieved to hear that there was no fee for the audition.

I took the elevator to one of the upper floors in the building and when I stepped into the corridor, sounds I heard were far from inspirational. In one studio, a budding artist was coaching some German repertoire. I listened at another door and an amateur was struggling with Mimi's aria from *La Bohème*. And of course from another room I heard the beginner doing her mi, me, ma's.

Madame B.'s studio was in silence. It was her sleeping quarters also, and was untidy to a degree. Madame herself was a woman of uncertain years. Her hair was frowzy and had been poorly dyed. She wore gay colors with a tendency to the oriental and as she pranced about it seemed to me that her vivacity was distinctly assumed. The whole picture was disconcerting and I told myself that I was again in the wrong spot. I sang two numbers to Madame's accompaniments and then she put on her act. With enthusiasm bordering on the dramatic Madame B. declared that my voice was beautiful, that I had everything to go with it and that in the course of *three* months, she would make me a Mary Garden! This was too much and I was completely disgusted with such flagrant dishonesty. To mention my feeble efforts in the same breath with the great art of the entrancing Mary Garden, this was bad enough. And to state that she, Madame B., could cause a miracle to happen in three months was a thought beneath my contempt. I eased myself out of her clutches and as I ambled along Broadway I felt a little like Diogenes. I had to dig deep into my academic philosophy for an uplifting thought with which to brighten my dark outlook.

About a week later and in a mood nearing the morose, I betook myself to my old haunt, the John Wanamaker Auditorium. A con-

cert had been announced and it was to be given by the artist-pupils of Madame von Ende. This name meant nothing to me then but I was soon to know her as artist, teacher and friend. Under her careful guidance and devotional training my voice found its way and it was from her studio that I went to the Metropolitan Opera Company.

As I listened to the pupils that afternoon one thought was strongly borne in upon me. All Madame's pupils, regardless of the size or timbre of the voice sang true to pitch, with good diction and a freedom of production. Surely this teacher could pass on the same knowledge to me, and I was not long in finding her address and making an appointment. Madame von Ende, then about thirty-five, was a woman of repose, dignity and culture. With her in the studio, at the time of the audition, was her husband Herwegh von Ende, director of the Von Ende School of Music, an artist-pupil, and an accompanist. Madame inquired as to why I had come to her, I told her quite frankly, that her pupils whom I had recently heard at Wanamaker's, seemed to have the thing for which I was searching.

I sang my two songs and then Madame chatted with me and made inquiries as to my former teacher and the length of time I had studied. She asked me to sing again and when I told her that I should like to work with her, she dismissed the others and sat down to talk. In a direct but kindly way, this woman told me that I had undoubtedly a good lyric soprano voice, how big it was she could not tell. The method of producing it was so bad that I was hearing but a small part of the voice. When the faults had been corrected and the emission free we could talk more about any possibilities but just now, Madame would promise nothing. I still insisted that I wanted to study with her and Madame agreed to accept me, but on these conditions. I must throw away or burn up, if I chose, all of my present repertoire. I must be on vocalises for at least three months, possibly six, depending on my own ability for prog-

ress. And I must neither sing nor practice at home until she gave me permission. It was a long arduous road, but if I was willing to travel it, Madame would help me. And joyfully accepting these terms I began my studies with Madame von Ende. Her fee was five dollars a half hour lesson, and I started with two lessons a week.

Madame von Ende was born in Paris, the daughter of the eminent violinist Eduard Remenyi—her mother was a noblewoman of the House of Hungary and Madame's childhood and girlhood were spent in the musical circles of Paris. Her godfather was no less a personage than Liszt and she remembered Rubinstein playing at her father's home. She, herself, had been a singer in Europe, but after an early marriage she devoted her life to teaching. From her marvelous musical background Madame brought to her own work the highest artistic ideals. She had no patience with the commonplace and demanded perfection from her pupils. Within a few weeks I knew that I was definitely on the right road and I obeyed Madame's every instruction to the letter. When friends asked me to sing, I pleaded an indisposition or an oncoming cold, but for over three months I never sang a phrase.

Now that my artistic cravings were being appeased a new bogey-boo appeared on the horizon—the financial scarecrow! My twenty-five dollars a month had to be increased to forty, to pay for two lessons a week. But cutting down on *matinées* and little luxuries, I added my own spending money to the fund and with careful budgeting of the housekeeping money, I managed to eke along, but it was hard work.

When Christmas came, Jay said that I might have a fur piece, which I had wanted, or a gold mesh bag—they were then very fashionable. I asked for a check to put with my lesson money. Jay refused and became adamant. He believed that I sang well enough to please anyone and could see no reason why I should deprive

myself for further study. But after arguments and appeals I got the check and no other Christmas present. Of course I dashed down to Madame von Ende and was terribly happy in the knowledge that several lessons were paid for in advance.

About two years ago, in going through some old books, a huge five dollar bill fell to the floor. It measured three by seven and a half inches and was the type of bill in use about twenty years ago. I remembered, that when I was studying, I would often take a five dollar bill from my house-keeping money and hide it in a book. When the lesson money was due, I would search through the books finding little surprises to the extent of ten or fifteen dollars. This particular bill—one that I had missed—I still have.

I call it a day's work to rise early, prepare breakfast, wash dishes, chase around with the carpet sweeper, dust and arrange time for an hour's morning practice. After lunch there is the daily marketing, and I never did it by telephone. There is more practice and then with time off for a bath, beauty helps and relaxation, the clock says that dinner should be on the way, for a healthy, hungry, adorable husband will soon bring in an appetite.

Lesson days were more hectic, for the lesson and the trip to and from the studio took two hours out of my day. And although I had arranged for two lessons a week, Madame von Ende had become interested in me, and whenever she had a cancellation in her daily schedule, I was called and I dashed down for my extra lesson. So many of these calls came at times most inopportune. Just as surely as I was dressed and waiting for the call, there would be none. And just as surely as I was in the bath-tub, enmeshed in housework, or involved in preparations for the evening meal, the telephone would ring—Madame had a free period and I was to come at once to the studio. No fireman answering the alarm moved with greater speed than I did, for these extra lessons meant very much to me.

And there was always time for reading. Emerson had long been a favorite and at times I would re-read some of the essays—I found them very helpful. I was passionately fond of poetry and could sit for hours with Browning, Shelley, Keats and Swinburne. When I was eighteen my sister Nan had given me a lovely copy of Robert Browning. It was an inexpensive binding and when it showed signs of decay, I put it away with many loving thoughts. I later had it beautifully rebound and I dearly prized it.

I was wallowing in sentiment these days and the poets so aptly expressed what I thought and felt. My reading had given birth to another urge—I wanted to travel. Was England really lovely in the spring, would I ever wander in the gardens of the Luxembourg or maybe visit the Châteaux of France? What was the lure of a country which gave us George Sand, Balzac, Rabelais and Verlaine? Was it always sunny in Italy, would I ever see the Ponte Vecchio, did lovers loll in ecstasy in a gondola, while the singing gondolier steered their bark through the Venetian Canals?

Yes, it must all be true, and what fairy godmother would arrange that I see it—or would I have to will myself there, and plan for it. My travel up to date, other than Albany, Troy and Brooklyn, had been between the intriguing pages of travel books.

Over a period of years Jay and I had arranged to spend at least two evenings a week alone and these evenings were devoted to reading.

Reading being a delightful habit, I had set out early in our married life to force that habit upon Jay. On one of our evenings at home, I suggested that we read together a Lecture on Venice. My poor dear husband could not understand why we wasted time on Venice. He argued that our problem of meeting monthly expenses was difficult in itself, and why dream of places and things so utterly out of reach. I was a dreamer and convinced him that all things are made of dreams. I told him that even the chair he was so

comfortably enjoying had been at one time the dream of a cabinet-maker. We read that lecture and many others and within the interval of ten years we had the happiness of visting many of our dream places.

In the beginning of my second year with Madame, she announced that I had made such important strides in my work, that we must make further plans.

I should have at least three lessons a week and while Madame could supervise the French and Italian repertoire, I must be placed in the hands of a competent German coach for my German lieder. Her choice of a coach was the then outstanding Richard Epstein. I had heard Epstein with his inimitable accompaniments and I knew that he had played for Marcella Sembrich, Elena Gerhardt, Geraldine Farrar and a host of top-notch artists. His name spelled magic to me and it was ecstasy to think of working with him. But what about his fee, which I presumed was a big fat one. Madame von Ende had sent Mr. Epstein some lucrative and less talented pupils, so she said, and upon her recommendation he took me on trial and for five dollars, a half hour lesson. In the year and a half that I coached with him, I never had a half hour lesson, it was always nearer an hour. But then, I was one of his pets.

Jay's salary had taken another jump, my spending allowance was raised and with checks for Christmas, birthday and anniversary presents, I could just keep my vocal head above water. From now on, I was to travel an almost lonely road,—Jay alone was in sympathetic accord. My family and relations in Albany, and my close friends in New York pointed out the inadvisability and the futility of a married woman taking a serious plunge into vocal study. But my dear husband knew that there had been little fulfillment in my life, and that I still hungered for my baby, or even babies. And he was wise indeed, to encourage my study, for the plan worked out to our mutual happiness.

When I entered Richard Epstein's studio my technique was good, and I could sing high C with ease. But my whole approach to serious art was superficial. Under Epstein's rigid regime and glorious inspiration I began to appreciate the depth and beauty of the art of song. Richard Epstein once played for my group of songs, at a concert given in the Von Ende School of Music. I was convinced then and still am that no one in that audience heard my singing. It was completely eclipsed by the ravishing beauty of his accompaniments. It would have pleased Epstein much to know that I had gone on to a chosen goal, but he died before I reached the Metropolitan. His autographed photograph, now on my piano and dated Christmas, 1917, says that I am the possessor of admirable artistic gifts, and that he wishes me a brilliant career—I bless him as artist, teacher and friend.

While I was a member of the New York Oratorio Society, a call came from the Metropolitan Opera to the effect that sixteen singers were wanted at the Opera House. There were to be four sopranos, four contraltos, four tenors and four basses. They must be able to read music at sight. Arturo Toscanini was giving a performance of the Beethoven Ninth Symphony. The orchestra was to be augmented to the number of one hundred and ten pieces and to the chorus he wished to add sixteen more voices.

I was chosen with the sopranos. I had never heard the Beethoven Ninth, nor seen a copy of the score. I was quite thrilled at appearing on the Metropolitan stage and singing under the baton of Toscanini.

We reported to the late Giulio Setti, then the chorus master, for one piano rehearsal and were instructed to report for orchestra rehearsal with Toscanini the next day. We were to receive twelve dollars and fifty cents each for our services.

The orchestra and chorus were assembled on the stage for re-

hearsal and Mr. Toscanini took his place at the conductor's desk. From those deep set eyes of his, this frail man looked at us, as a whole, and I swear that I thought he was looking only at me! I have never before nor since been in contact with such a dynamic personality. I was terrified that I should make a mistake and my emotion was one of fear, plus a strange fascination. The orchestra began to play and something went wrong with the drums. Mr. Toscanini promptly came down from his desk and rolled the sticks for the drummer, humming and pointing out the effects for which he was working. He mounted the platform again and in a little while, he stopped the orchestra and talked to the cellists. He then went to the first cellist and taking the bow from his hands, he hummed again and drawing the bow over the strings he illustrated the tone colors which he requested them to play. So far, so good, and all was seemingly peaceful. I was entranced with the music and then without warning Toscanini went into a tantrum! He stamped on the platform, chattered in Italian like a mad magpie, and tore at his hair. He then took the baton between his teeth and bit it. He was having a time of it and believe me, no one disturbed him. Finally he took the baton between his hands, broke it into two pieces, and throwing the pieces on the floor, he left the stage! What an ominous silence reigned. As for poor me, fear had so completely gripped me, that I wanted to slip out and go home. I felt sure that I would sing with the basses or tenors instead of the sopranos, or suppose I did not sing at all, or suppose I sang a wrong note. In any case, I was directly in the line of his penetrating eyes, and he would probably rush down and strangle me.

But I kept my ground and after about a ten-minute wait, Toscanini re-appeared on the platform carrying another baton. He had mopped his perspiring face, brushed his hair, wore fresh linen and seemed calm. He was as pale as death. The rehearsal continued without further outbursts. We were dismissed with the Toscanini

beatific smile and told to report for the concert the next night, which was Sunday.

The concert audience was brilliant, the house packed from pit to dome and hundreds of standees had been turned away. Of the soloists I remember Frieda Hempel and Louise Homer. I think that Carl Jorn was the tenor and I have forgotten the bass. The Beethoven Ninth may never send you into rhapsodies and some of the musical intelligentsia consider it the least interesting of the Beethoven symphonies. But hearing it for the first time under Toscanini, being a voice in the ensemble, and on the Metropolitan Opera House stage was indeed something to be remembered.

The whole effect of that performance left me in a trance and finding my way to the subway, I was still in that trance when the train conductor called "14th Street, change for the Battery!"—which only means that I was on my way to Brooklyn and I lived in upper Manhattan—I was calmly traveling in the opposite direction.

On Monday, I called at the Opera House to receive from the treasurer my first check for singing. How I wanted to keep that check as a souvenir, but I needed the money for my lessons and I cashed the check the next day.

At the closing concert of the season at the Von Ende School of Music, I was awarded the gold medal in the singing department. To celebrate my winning the medal, we gave a little dinner party at Healy's—there were several Healy's restaurants in New York at that time.

One of our guests was my husband's lawyer and he was an old and dear friend. Mr. Roe, that was his name, made inquiries and in a joking manner, as to what I proposed to do next. Without hesitancy I replied that I was going to move Heaven and Hell to get an audition at the Metropolitan Opera.

Our little gathering received this bit of news with real consterna-

tion, refusing to believe that I was serious. My own husband laughed loudest and longest but dear old Mr. Roe sensed my determination. And in an unguarded moment he casually mentioned that he knew quite well a Mr. Constantine Sperco. Mr. Sperco was financial adviser and devoted friend to no less a person than Enrico Caruso!

Mr. Roe told me later that the moment he had mentioned Caruso's name, he realized his mistake. For there was a gleam of joy in my eyes and a new hope was born in my heart. Of course I got on the telephone the next morning and many mornings thereafter in vain pleadings to Mr. Roe.

Finally I descended upon him in his office and pleaded my case. My argument was that if Mr. Caruso would consent to pass judgment on my voice, we would all be happy. If there was no material worthy of a career, I would accept the verdict as a final one and seek another outlet.

I won my case and in a few days Mr. Roe telephoned to say that he had talked with Mr. Sperco. The result of that talk was discouraging but not hopeless. Mr. Caruso abominated listening to voices and never gave auditions. But he liked to give interviews and a scheme was afoot to introduce me as a writer! If Mr. Caruso happened to like me, I might at some future date be included in one of his social events and then there might be an opportunity for me to sing. And now I was faced with a serious and disturbing problem. If the meeting could be arranged, how could I go through with it? Summoning my scattered wits into line, I rehearsed and rehearsed my plan of action. The approach would be gentle, the questions most tactful and my etiquette that of the perfect newspaper woman. I had a good case of the jitters and succeeded in communicating the same to my husband and my teacher.

The interview was arranged for five o'clock, one afternoon in April 1917. At this time, Mr. Caruso was not married. I had never

seen Mr. Sperco but on the telephone he had instructed me to meet him in the lobby of the Hotel Knickerbocker, at which hotel Enrico Caruso was then living. Mr. Sperco would have a page boy call my name and in that way we would recognize each other.

With real dismay, I saw the foolishness of it all and wanted to turn back. But it was now too late, so with faint bravery, I pushed myself down to the Hotel Knickerbocker. In due time, the page boy called my name and led me to the ruddy, sweet-faced and kindly Mr. Sperco. I was told that the interview might last five minutes, or fifteen but in no case and under no circumstances was I to mention singing or singers!

We took the elevator to the tenth floor and Mr. Sperco ushered me into a small room, wished me luck and disappeared. With pounding heart I waited for about five minutes, although it seemed an eternity, and there appeared in the doorway Enrico Caruso. He was faultlessly dressed, and stood there looking at me and fumbling with his watch chain. I arose and as I did, he said, "You no have to stand up, you are a lady, Caruso stand." "I do not mind standing, Mr. Caruso, I have stood many hours to hear you sing—"

"Good, then we both sit down."

We sat on the little sofa, facing a Hardman & Peck upright piano which was painted in white and trimmed in gold.

"So you often hear Caruso sing."

"Yes, many times."

"What role you like me best?"

"I like you in all roles but I prefer Caruso in *Pagliacci*."

"Bene" (good).

"In what other role you like me?"

"I love you as Des Grieux in Massenet's *Manon*."

"You love me, or you love Des Grieux?"

At this point I began to perceive that Mr. Caruso was no novice in the art of flirtation and I take no back seat myself along these

lines. But the physical nearness of this great artist whom I had worshiped, the thought that he would despise me for the lie I was acting and the terror of the interview to come, had all combined to make me panicky. I just looked at him with wide staring eyes and I know that my face held no more expression than a baby's backside!

Caruso evidently realized my nervousness, he reached for my hand and giving it a gentle pressure he said, "Don't be afraid of Caruso, he look cross to scare you, he just a big baby. Now you smile and Caruso smile." Of course I came out of my trance for a moment and beamed upon him. He laughed and said, "Good—now we are friends and we talk some more. That is a pretty dress you wear."

It was a princess dress buttoned from collar to hem. In playful manner, Caruso touched the first button at the hem, and as he touched each one he repeated in a kind of baby talk, "Rich man, Poor man, Beggar man, Thief!" This went on until the last button at the throat was reached and the word was thief! He then tilted my chin, held it in his strong warm hand and looked steadily at my mouth. "Caruso is no thief," he said, "he never steals anything."

I blushed to the point of suffocation, my hands were ice cold and I felt dizzy.

With a sudden change of mood the question came which I had been fearing—"And so, you are a writer?"

With no hesitation, and looking squarely in the eyes of the great tenor, I told my lie, and answered that I was a writer. Luck was with me, for he did not ask with what paper or magazine I was connected. But he did make a happy suggestion to the effect that I ask no questions, he would talk and I could use for my written article whatever I found of interest. What a relief that was and a breathing space in which I could quiet my fast pulse!

Rising from the little sofa, with a most courtly bow and all his

grand manner of the theater, Mr. Caruso offered me his arm and said, "Caruso will show the charming lady his apartment." We passed through the hall and I would not have exchanged places with a queen, walking arm in arm as I was with that grand man and superb artist.

He opened a door on the left and we stepped into a room that resembled a men's clothing shop. A valet was pressing a suit, and on three of the side walls were hanging rows and rows of clothes, evening, afternoon, morning and street clothes. Another closet held overcoats, dozens of them. Mr. Caruso pointed out some pet overcoats which he had had made in London. Then there were some from South America, Italy and, of course, some beauties from New York. The shelves were piled high with hat boxes and Mr. Caruso remarked rather like a cute school boy—"Caruso likes beautiful clothes, you see he has many." I took it for a cue that I was to mention this in my written article.

He took me next into his bedroom and explained that his reason for taking me there was to show me his treasures. These treasures, on his dresser, proved to be three small photographs, one of his mother, one of his father and one of his two sons. It was news to me that Enrico Caruso had two sons. I made no comment, but he did, saying that he was unhappy about them and did not want to talk about the situation. I later heard his tragic story from mutual friends.

Through the bedroom door we stepped into a large studio living room where around a huge desk were seated three men, my new friend Sperco, the late Salvatore Fucito, Mr. Caruso's vocal coach, and Bruno Zirato. Mr. Zirato was Mr. Caruso's private secretary. He now serves Arturo Toscanini in the same efficient capacity.

The three men were opening and sorting the tenor's fan mail, which was piled high. Mr. Caruso made the necessary introductions and led me to one of the windows which overlooked Broadway.

By leaning out of the window we could see the Opera House. "Look," he said, "there is the Metropolitan Opera. I love it and I love to sing for my audiences. On nights when I am not singing I look out this window and say in my heart, 'I don't want to be here, I want to be there.'"

From the window we returned to the desk. As I had made a rendez-vous with my good husband for five-thirty at the Hotel Astor and it was now six, I allowed that it was time to leave. Mr. Caruso was surprised at my thought of going and offered me a seat beside him at his desk. He wanted me to get a sidelight on the strange mail which comes to a world famed artist. Of course there were dozens of requests for autographs and photographs. There were some who wrote for money, others for charitable contributions and one man for clothes.

There were many funny letters and one which particularly amused Mr. Caruso, he passed on to me for my perusal. This letter, scrawled on soiled paper, was written by an Italian woman. She told Mr. Caruso that she had just had a new baby boy. She had named him for Caruso and requested a picture and some money present for the new baby. Mr. Caruso claimed no responsibility for the baby and made some screamingly witty remarks about the number of children who had been named for him.

The photographs which the artist signed, were small, about the size of a post-card. I sat there hungrily, hoping that one of them might come my way. Finally I gently broached my request—could I please have one of the little photos. "No," thundered Mr. Caruso, "you may not." Then turning to Bruno Zirato, he asked him if there were any of his large photographs available. Mr. Zirato disappeared into another room and returned to say that only two were left, others were on order. I have one of those beautifully autographed pictures on my piano and you may believe me when I tell you that it is a treasured possession.

At this point, it being about six-fifteen, I had visions of my beloved husband pacing the lobby of the Hotel Astor and I rose to say good night. But Mr. Caruso would have none of it, saying that he would be most inhospitable to let me depart without a drink. I protested, he insisted and a waiter was called. And now what to drink! I was already intoxicated and a cocktail would be dangerous. I was truly ashamed to order a glass of beer and in sheer desperation, I said I would have a gin rickey. At the word rickey, Mr. Caruso became convulsed with laughter. He thought it was such a queer name for a drink and without consulting the other gentlemen, he declared that we would all have gin rickeys!

Mr. Caruso made a face when he tasted his drink, and I only sipped mine whereupon he conceived the brilliant idea that we should have some champagne. Now I became firm, gathered myself together and announced that I was already late for a dinner engagement. The great tenor asked me if my date was with a lady or a gentleman. The latter, of course, I said, but neglected to say that the waiting cavalier was my husband. I had been introduced properly and under my married name, but after all this was no time nor place to mention a loving husband. Mr. Caruso arose and with another courtly gesture, again offered me his arm. He escorted me to the elevator, lightly kissed my outstretched hand and said that he hoped we might meet again. For my part, I thought I did not care if I should ever see him again for the whole experience had been confounding to say the least. And as I plowed my way through the crowd at Times Square, these things came into my tired mind.

Did I really see and talk with the greatest living artist—was I in his apartment for about an hour and a half, which time had passed like a few fleeting moments? And did Enrico Caruso give me an autographed picture and treat me with the utmost kindness and consideration—yes, I guess he did!

And now that I had connived deliberately to bring about this meeting I felt ashamed and ungrateful and I solemnly vowed that if I should ever by accident meet Mr. Caruso again, I would run away and hide.

Puppets that we are in this great cosmos, how shall we know who is to pull the strings and when we move and in what direction! I could have well saved my plans and worries for I was not to see nor talk again with Mr. Caruso personally for one whole year, until April 1918. Needless to say I missed but very few of his performances.

The next evening over some cocktails and a cozy dinner Jay and I reviewed the situation and its possible outcome. "Why not," argued my husband, "dismiss the whole thought of public singing. You have a competent maid, a new automobile and a summer camp at Lake George. With my great love, and possibly yet some children, I think we can find contentment." And if I quietly acquiesced, it was only with my lips and in an endeavor to be kind. For in my heart, I knew that I must sing and more's the pity, it had to be in the Metropolitan Opera House!

## VII

### *THE METROPOLITAN AT LAST*

**A**FTER MY meeting with Enrico Caruso, there passed a week of anxious watchful waiting, but no word of any kind. Unable to bear it longer, I telephoned Mr. Roe and was promptly told to come down to his office. My hopes were running high and the road ahead now seemed an open sesame. But one glance at Mr. Roe's face told me that something had gone amiss. With all the deliberation and solemnity when addressing a jury, my sponsor lawyer delivered himself of an ultimatum to the effect that all negotiations had ceased.

It seems that Mr. Caruso had expressed a liking for me, had asked for my address and said that he might invite me to his hotel for luncheon or dinner. This appeared to me in the light of a harmless and highly interesting experience, but Mr. Roe and Mr. Sperco viewed it in another light. They declared that even the slightest attention shown me by the great tenor could only turn my head. They had decided that my married life was an ideally happy one and they wished to have no part in sending me off on a tangent. I pleaded and remonstrated and pointed out to Mr. Roe the folly and exaggeration of his line of thought. And I asserted that my own insight and cleverness could take care of any possible situation which might arise. But I may just as well have talked to the Great Sphinx, for Mr. Roe remained serene and immobile. And in parting he said with no small gleam of satisfaction that he was very relieved to have washed his hands of the whole affair. I was disappointed, crushed, thwarted, but not yet defeated.

I went directly to Mme. von Ende's studio, told my dismal story and begged her to help me. The dear soul called Mr. Roe and made an appointment to see him the next day. She gave up her afternoon lessons, trotted downtown to his office and pleaded my case, but to no avail. Mr. Roe further confided to Mme. von Ende that under his instructions Mr. Sperco had told Mr. Caruso that I had left town on a commission for my newspaper!

I told Jay the whole truth and after a heart to heart talk with Madame we decided to forget the whole episode and hope for another opening for my audition. The saying that "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread" was indeed applicable to me at that time. For had Mr. Caruso given me a hearing in 1917, I would have been unprepared and would have met with failure. But some kindly Fates were watching me, I was to have another year of intensive study, an accidental meeting with Mr. Caruso, and my audition.

In the meantime I was singing in churches, at patriotic rallies, in small concerts and made two appearances in the John Wanamaker Auditorium. This time I was on the stage and not in the audience and was I thrilled when I was programmed as an artist-pupil of Mme. von Ende.

On one of these programs with me, was a young tenor named Graham McNamee—now the well-known radio announcer.

Mrs. McNamee was her son's vocal teacher, and a most genial soul she was. She praised my singing and said she wished that I were her pupil, for she felt that I was going places. Mrs. McNamee came to hear me when I was at the Metropolitan and was among the first-nighters when I opened in "Natja" on Broadway.

After one of these Wanamaker concerts, the director Alexander Russell congratulated me, remarking that he expected to pay to hear me sing and in the near future. I thought he was being facetious and asked for an explanation. Mr. Russell declared that several young artists had gone from that stage to bigger things and cited

the case of the beautiful young soprano, Anna Case, who was then at the Metropolitan Opera.

In 1917 the United States was in the World War. The fever of patriotism had caught us all and each one was doing his or her bit—as it was called. Jay was drafted and we made heart-breaking preparations for the end of all things. Jay had invested all his earnings in Pierce-Arrow Trucks and was now in business for himself. That business and most of the investment, we were prepared to lose. As for my vocal work, it was not even to be thought of.

We decided that when Jay went to France, we would put our furniture in storage and I was to join the Women's Ambulance Corps. These volunteer workers wore stunning uniforms and I think the theater again had drawn me to that branch of the service.

At this time we lived in an elevator apartment on Riverside Drive, and from our living room there was a lovely view of the Hudson River and the Palisades. There was atmosphere too, in this apartment and from our windows which faced west, the sunsets of spring, summer, autumn and winter had made many an inspiring picture for our delight. On one particularly beautiful afternoon I sat in my favorite chair, looking across the Palisades, through the sunset into blank despair. Jay had been called for his medical examination and within the hour I would know the day of his departure for camp and eventually for France. While I had schooled myself for this moment and swore to smile when Jay returned, my heart was sick. We were so in love, he was advancing in rapid strides and I was really singing.

I had a little German maid to do my housework and we had been planning to buy a small boat. Life never seemed sweeter and now we were facing a parting which might well indeed be forever.

I went to the Victrola and played the "Liebestraum" of Franz Liszt, so that I might sink further into melancholia. That sounds

ridiculous you say, and that makes you right. If you have read as far as this page, you have long since noticed that my whole life is touched with the ridiculous. I suppose I sat there about an hour, sinking deeper and deeper into the slough of despond.

When Jay entered the room, I noticed his strained expression and braced myself for the worst. "I've been rejected," he said, and he sank into a chair. I couldn't seem to grasp it, and sat staring at him. "I've been rejected, don't you understand? They won't take me, they say that I have flat feet and am fifty pounds overweight." I arose to cross the room, and I managed to mumble—"Oh, then you don't have to go to war!" And that's all I remember, for I politely folded up in a dead faint. I have never fainted before that time nor since although a gracious fainting spell would have been in order, on more than one later occasion.

The tired nerves had snapped and my poor heart turned a somersault without giving me an instant's warning! And with tears and laughter, kisses and hugs and more tears and laughter came the realization that we were not to be separated until the next draft. We could live and love again and the respite might even be six months. It was all too heavenly and if we celebrated with cocktails of bath-tub gin and orange juice, that should be easy to understand!

For one of my bits in the World War, I had organized a unit for entertainment at the various camps. These camps were in New Jersey, Long Island and in and about New York. I had a quartette of entertainers in which I was the soprano, my companions being a violinist, speaker, contralto and accompanist. Jay used our car and acted as chauffeur, the whole party crowding into the car as best we could. I arranged a program which covered about an hour, with numbers in reserve if needed. We made many trips to the various camps and in all kinds of weather.

One night we went to a reconstruction hospital, on Gun Hill Road. That concert nearly devastated our unit, for we were singing

to an audience of fine healthy American boys who were either blind or shellshocked! Those unfortunate lads had been trying to make the world safe for democracy. And I promise you that it was not easy to face these boys and bring them happy messages through our music, when our own hearts were breaking with the pity of it all. And we left there with headache and heartache and many maledictions for the damned Germans who had brought this destruction upon a peaceful world.

There was living in America at this time, an eminent vocal teacher, an Englishwoman named Clara Novello-Davies. Mme. Novello-Davies had organized an immense Women's Choral Society, comprised of small chorus factions from the different women's clubs. I was Madame's assistant and at times conducted the rehearsals when she was delayed. We took this chorus from place to place to stimulate the public's interest in the big Liberty Loan Drives. Our selections were the old reliables, "Over There," "Keep the Home Fires Burning" and "There's a Long, Long Trail." These with other like numbers were guaranteed to pull at your heart strings and, we hoped, open your purse strings for another Liberty Bond.

In April 1918 there was to be what was called a Monster Liberty Loan Drive, to be held at the Metropolitan Opera House. Our Women's Choral was asked to co-operate.

We called a rehearsal at the Opera House, not necessarily for the music, but in order to properly place on the stage, our first and second sopranos, and first and second contraltos. We had arranged a spectacular finale with a huge American Flag spot-lighted and fanned by electric breezes. Around the flag the choral sang our National Anthem. The rehearsal being over, we dismissed the choral and two of the committee remained with me to further discuss our plans.

We sat down in the orchestra seats, the other two women dis-

cussing the final details of the Big Rally, I trying to concentrate and answering a feeble "yes" or "no" as I felt might fit the case. But in my mind these thoughts were tumbling quick and fast. Isn't it wonderful to sit in red plush chairs, down front and so close to everything—isn't the stage immense—and just look at the size of that orchestra pit! Heavenly as it must be to hear a performance from this seat, how thrilling it must be to belong to the artist family on the other side of the footlights!

We had only spent ten minutes in the auditorium, but in that short period, Lady Luck had been shuffling the cards for me. The bid was for Time and I had been passed the Ace of Opportunity. For as we strolled east on 39th Street, I saw, walking toward us, Enrico Caruso.

One year to the week had elapsed since I had met the great tenor and acting on inspiration and impulse I turned to the two women and almost pushing them to one side, I begged to be excused, and said I had an important message for Mr. Caruso. They looked at me as if I had gone daft, and passed down the street. Then they turned to look back at me and now curiosity makes me wonder what they were really thinking.

Walking boldly up to Mr. Caruso, I extended my hand and encompassed him with the biggest smile that I could summon. He in turn was most gracious and we exchanged friendly greetings. He said that he had seen me come from the Opera House and asked me the nature of my business. I told him of our patriotic choral and asked if he could spare me five minutes to talk of another matter. A strong spring wind was blowing, which to a singer is akin to smallpox. And pulling his collar about his throat, he suggested that we get out of the wind and step into the little office on 39th Street. Happily the office was empty and we sat on the little bench near the window. I had to think and act quickly for at any moment someone might disturb our privacy and with one deep pull for courage, I plunged into my story—

I was not a writer, never had been one, I was a singer. Mr. Caruso uttered two words "Mio Dio" (MY God) and we sat looking at each other. I picked up the conversation and told Mr. Caruso that I would probably be the most happy person alive if he would hear me sing. I wanted his opinion on my voice and my work and promised to be eternally grateful and abide by his judgment. I was in a suppliant mood, and terribly earnest. Without hesitation Mr. Caruso replied that he would hear me sing, although he would have preferred that I was a writer and not a singer!

He said that he was leaving for Boston, to be gone one week and asked me to write him the following week reminding him of his promise.

I know that my eyes must have caressed him with profound appreciation. And although I only pressed his hand in parting I wanted to give the great tenor a good hearty kiss—I was terribly happy.

And maybe it is just as well that this impulsive moment passed, for in the years to come I learned a lot about this kissing business. The kisses we give our children, our relations and our friends are harmless and fitting. But kisses exchanged between the opposite sex run us into the realm of danger. And I see no guarantee of immunity unless either the kisser, the party of the first part, or the kissee, the party of the second part, is functioning with a heart which pumps ice water, and not red blood. I have experimented along these lines and speak from knowledge. Once, in a moment of exhilaration, I kissed a seemingly passive male, only to find that I had turned him into a wild cat!

And furthermore, I once submitted to what purported to be a gentle good-night kiss and found myself catapulted into a fathomless love affair! The Love Bug is no respecter of healthy lips and you just might get by with a mild infection. But if a fever sets in, there often follows a conflagration and there you are! So let this be

a warning to you, unless perchance you prefer to experiment on your own.

You may well believe that I was walking on air when I left that little office. And poor patient Jay and ever faithful Mme. von Ende had to travel in the clouds with me—my hopes were running very high.

The next week was a busy one and practically spent in the studio. I had worked for two years on the aria "*Depuis le Jour*"—from *Louise*, but now that the auspicious audition was at hand, there was polishing to do, and I breathed, dreamed and lived "*Depuis le Jour*."

I took time off to purchase a stunning new outfit, for although I lay no claim to beauty, I had my points and proposed to make the most of them. I thought then and think now that in a battle with men, a woman can walk away with the first few rounds if she happens to please the eye. And I bedecked myself accordingly.

I wrote my note to Mr. Caruso, reminded him of his promise to hear me and received an immediate reply from his own hand. This letter was followed by one from his secretary, Bruno Zirato, giving me an appointment on May 4, 1918, at five o'clock.

Mr. Francis Moore was our studio accompanist and he was to play for me. His fee was five dollars. Francis Moore today occupies an enviable position as a concert pianist and he has won splendid acclaim in his piano recitals. Together Mr. Moore and I went to the Hotel Knickerbocker, were properly announced and were ushered into the same small room where one year ago I had appeared as a press correspondent!

There was the little sofa where I had sat with Mr. Caruso, and there was the same little white piano. The day was warm, the one window was closed and I felt faint. I was sick unto death with nerves and told Francis Moore that I would give a thousand dollars to be down on 42nd Street. I do not know why I set the price at a

thousand dollars, unless that amount meant a lot of money to me, and it assuredly did. Mr. Moore spoke words of cheer and encouragement and in a few minutes Mr. Caruso appeared in the doorway.

He was very grave and almost sullen it seemed. He accepted the introduction to Mr. Moore rather frigidly and the atmosphere in general was funereal. Crossing the room, Mr. Caruso opened the window, drew a chair before it, sat down and stared at me. His manner suggested boredom and I imagined that he was saying—Well, you came here to put on a show, why don't you begin?

I passed my music to Mr. Moore and announced that I would sing an aria. Mr. Caruso promptly said he would hear no aria just yet. I was to sing vocalises and he would see if I really had a voice.

If I felt consternation at this point, it was with reason, for we had rehearsed no vocalises and I felt that this ordeal was more like an examination than an audition. Going to the piano, I indicated such chords, scales and arpeggios as would show the range of my voice and we began what was my usual practice period. Mr. Caruso very considerably looked out on 42nd Street so that I might control my shaking diaphragm and get my breath. When I had exercised quite at length Mr. Caruso stopped me and said it was enough. He also said that I had a voice and he would now hear me sing. I began my "Depuis le Jour," and again he looked out of the window, but not for long. He turned and faced me with acute attention and I felt that he was looking into my throat.

At the close of the aria, I asked if I should sing another number. Mr. Caruso said there was no need for that and Mr. Moore taking this remark for his cue, bade us good day and departed.

I was alone now with Mr. Caruso, or at least I thought I was and our conversation ran like this:

*Mr. Caruso:* "You have a fresh lovely voice, what are you going to do with it?"

M—"I want to go into the theater."

C—"The theater is no place for you, it is dirty and full of intrigue. Sperco tells me that you have a fine husband and are happily married. Do you want to risk losing that happiness?"

M—"No, Mr. Caruso, I believe that I can sing publicly and keep my home life intact."

C—"Very well, then I suggest that you get a good manager and do a show on Broadway. You would make a second Fritzi Scheff, and earn a lot of money."

M—"Thank you for the compliment, but I have so loved the beautiful in music and worked so hard, that I could not bear to turn in another direction. And I had rather sing small parts in the Metropolitan Opera Company, than be a Broadway prima donna."

There was a little grunt from Mr. Caruso, and I later heard that he liked my reply to the Broadway suggestion.

And continuing the conversation he said,

C—"And what do you want me to do now?"

M—"I want you to do nothing, but I wish with all my heart that you could arrange for me an audition with Mr. Gatti-Casazza."

Another grunt, a silence, and then—

C—"Do you understand that without experience and routine you would always have to sing small parts? You could never rise above them and would never make big money."

M—"Yes, I understand that, but it would make me terribly happy to be a member of the Company."

Like the Fairy Godmother who always appears at the most propitious moment, dear old Mr. Sperco walked into the room. "Well, Enrico," he said, "and how do you like our little singer?"

C—"In times like these, I must be honest. She does know how to use her voice and had worked hard. But now she asks me to arrange for Gatti to hear her!"

Sperco feigned surprise, and in his own cute way replied, "That would be marvelous, Enrico"—

C—"Who said I would do it—I don't know, but I will think it over."

Whereupon I made my thank you and good-byes and went home to fret and fume and worry and plan and perpetrate my nerves upon my patient husband and my teacher.

Mr. Sperco telephoned the next morning, to say that he had been eavesdropping at my audition and had heard the entire conversation. He confessed that he had asked Mr. Caruso to put me through the paces, and if possible, discourage me. I was not to sing an aria and be dismissed with idle compliments.

This, of course, explained why I was requested to go through the vocalises. Sperco also said that Mr. Caruso was pleased with my voice and my sincerity. And the fact that I would choose a small part in great music, rather than great money in unimportant music, had made a splendid impression upon Mr. Caruso. I was to wait and be patient. Patience was never one of my virtues, although the years have now let me into some of its secrets. When I was younger and clamouring to go places, I had little time or inclination to develop that estimable virtue.

These days of 1917 did not make for calm. Patriotism had stimulated us all with its attendant frenzy. Every day our soldiers or sailors marched down Fifth Avenue on the way to the front. The stirring martial music, waving of flags, and heart-breaking good-byes left one completely limp. Every day the newspapers carried headlines of the German atrocities. At the cinema there were endless pictures of the Allied dead on the fields of France and Belgium. It was awful, one felt like a slacker and something had to be done.

Jay had spoken to some men of influence and tried to join the motor corps. He figured that he could drive a truck and his weight and flat feet would be no hindrance. But he was told that there would always be marching to do and that his feet would not last for a week. He must wait, there would be another draft in October.

And this time, feet, weight, hare-lip or hump back, he would be taken; there would be a great need for men to finish the job.

I had to make plans, for our apartment lease expired in October. I must learn to drive a car, for I was going to join Mrs. Harriman's Division,—I just had to wear one of those stunning uniforms. With these things in mind and the knowledge that Mr. Caruso would sail for Italy in two weeks, I had no inclination for patience. After two days, I wrote a long letter to him. I thanked him for his time, indulgence, his kindly comments and his advice. I asked again that he arrange an audition with Gatti, so that I might know, for all time whether or not the Metropolitan Opera would hold for me, an open or closed door. I wished the great artist continued health, happiness, success and a pleasant summer in his beloved Italy.

This letter brought a telephone call from Mr. Sperco. He told me that I was to appear the next afternoon, to sing for Mr. Gatti. On the way to the Opera House, I was to stop at the desk of the Hotel Knickerbocker, where there would be a letter of introduction from Mr. Caruso. And Mr. Caruso had suggested that I bring another aria with me. If Mr. Gatti was interested he might ask me to sing twice.

My former accompanist, Francis Moore, was occupied on the day of the audition, so I engaged another studio accompanist, William Reddick, and for the same fee of five dollars. Mr. Reddick was a jovial sort, with a grand sense of humor. On the way to the Opera House he said to me, "Now, don't be discouraged, kid," and I was no kid. "I have played auditions before. Sometimes that Bozo (meaning Mr. Gatti) stops you in the middle of the aria and sometimes after about three lines. He just says thank you and you find yourself out on 39th Street. Of course, the poor devil has to listen to a lot of lemons, every season. No wonder he gets disgusted. But the season is late now and this may be a private audition, in which case, you stand a better chance."

"Once I played an audition for a woman who chose the Mad Scene from *Lucia*, and she did it in costume. They all laughed at her, and I could hardly play, for wanting to laugh myself. God, it was awful! But keep your chin up and I'll be right behind you."

And with these distracting remarks, we entered the 39th Street Office and I sent in my letter. In a few minutes Mr. Gatti appeared. He shook my hand, unloosened his Sphinx-like expression and dropped me a fleeting smile. He indicated my entrance to the stage and he went through to the auditorium.

A small row of footlights was turned on and there was an upright piano down stage and to my left. The house was in darkness, but I could hear voices and I could dimly discern Mr. Gatti and four other men. I later knew them to be Bodanzky, Moranzoni, Bambo-schek and Bellucci. The interpreter, Bellucci, walked down the aisle and asked me what I would like to sing. "Depuis le Jour," from *Louise*, was the aria I had chosen and he repeated the title to my little audience.

I had talked to myself, along these lines— Now don't get nerves and make a damn fool of yourself. You have worked, planned, worried and schemed for this moment. There is nothing left now but to sing your best. It will soon be over and what a relief it will be for all of us.

I sang the "Depuis le Jour" to the end and in the waiting silence I heard whisperings in the auditorium. Bellucci came to the stage again, saying that Mr. Gatti would like me to sing again and in Italian! Now I did have a heart flutter as I told Mr. Reddick that we would do Musetta's Waltz from *La Bohème*. Mr. Reddick mumbled to me, "Give them the works, kid, I think you're on your way."

When I finished the *La Bohème*, Bellucci said that Mr. Gatti wished me to step into the auditorium, he wanted to talk with me. I said a hurried good-by to Mr. Reddick, who answered in his

flippant manner, "Good-by, kiddo, you'll be getting your mail here next season!"

We spoke through the interpreter who first made this assertion—"Of course, Mr. Gatti says, you have been on the stage."

"No, I have never been on any stage."

"You have had dramatic training?"

"No other than amateur work in school."

"Do you speak French?"

"Yes, a little."

"Do you speak Italian?"

"No."

"What is your repertoire?"

And at this point I had to do some fast thinking. I had once read of a prima donna who, upon being engaged for her first appearance, had been asked the extent of her repertoire. At that time she had mastered only two roles, but in her reply she mentioned eight roles, obviously to create a better impression. And with this brazen idea in mind, I carelessly tossed off my repertoire, *Madam Butterfly*, *La Bohème*, *Tosca*, *Louise*, *Traviata*, *Les Huguenots*! Now I didn't know one of these roles in its entirety, but I did know the soprano aria from each of them. And had I been immediately called upon, I could have sung that aria, so I felt safe.

Mr. Gatti had been undressing me with his eyes and I felt that he knew my waist, bust and hip measurements, together with my exact weight. But, after all, that is a compensating prerogative for theatrical managers and I had to take it. There ensued a short conversation between Mr. Gatti and the conductors, and I stood out in the aisle as Exhibit A.

They spoke in Italian which was to me as intelligible as Choctaw, while I mentally planned to betake me to the Berlitz School for languages. It is an uncomfortable feeling to hear one's self discussed in an unknown tongue. The talkers may be saying God Bless You,

or God Damn You, while you hang in mid-air. And you try to ferret out, from their expressions and various gesticulations, just what is your *status quo*.

Well, I soon knew, for I was left in mid-air. Bellucci said that Mr. Gatti thanked me for coming down and I would hear from him. I was dismissed. There were no bows, no smiles, no handshakes. I just looked at four frozen faces, turned on my heel and found myself again on 39th Street.

In these war days there was in use a rather disparaging slogan, "Watchful Waiting." It was often cast as a slur upon our President and Congress because they hesitated to rush us into war. I did my share of watchful waiting and what with relaxed nerves plus agonizing suspense I was well in line for admission to the Cuckoo House!

We had discharged our little German maid, or rather she signified that she preferred to be rid of us. Our dinner conversation naturally centered around the war and one evening when we were at dinner she bounced into the dining room and in hysterical rage she delivered herself of a speech—it had evidently been rehearsed. She made no pauses and scarcely stopped for breath.

"You are both liars," she said, "and you don't know *vy iss de var*. Because you read lying newspapers." We were reading the *New York Times*, but I suppose it should have been the *Staats Zeitung*.

"Vy don't you read *de trut*—The Frenchs throwed a bumb (bomb) on Nuremberg und dot made *de vor*. You are lying about Chermanny und *de Chermans* und I don't vant I should live mit you any more."

That was most agreeable to us; we could now converse without whispering, and we engaged an elderly and delightful English maid. Her parents had been in service in England with the Duke of Devonshire. Bessie, that was her name, was very proud of her background. She had a gentle poise and exquisite manners. Bessie had two brothers in the war service, one was at the front and the

younger brother was in a reconstruction hospital in London. It was comfortable to have one of our Allies living with us and Bessie did a fine thing for the cause.

We lived at 139th Street and Riverside Drive and this section, because of the battleships on the Hudson, was a zone forbidden to any non-citizen. The janitor of the apartment house was a German and he looked not unlike the former Kaiser. Bessie hated him and made trips to the cellar to assure herself that he could scarcely speak English. She tormented me to ask for an investigation of his activities, but I paid little attention. I attributed her wrath and hatred to her natural feeling against Germans. One day Bessie called me to the window and what I saw put me on the alert.

The janitor was conferring with two particularly well-dressed men. I cautiously raised the window and heard them talking in German. I had to restrain Bessie, she was for calling them Huns and dirty Prussians, and suggested that she brain one of them with a flat iron.

To my amazement the two men removed their good looking gloves and each one carried a garbage can into the cellar.

Bessie stood on guard and we timed their visit with our janitor—they had been there about an hour.

I telephoned the incident to Jay and he in turn called the Department of Secret Service. Within three days our janitor and his visitors had been interned. A Secret Service man called at our apartment to tell us this and thank us for our vigilance. He said that through the three lesser offenders, he had located an important spy for whom the Government had been searching. This man was a German who occupied one of the top apartments in *our* house.

There were codes and damaging correspondence found in his apartment and the man was arrested. The incident appeared in our daily papers and Bessie's exultation was beyond words. She had done her bit for the Allies.

Bessie adored my singing and in a moment of confidence I had told her I was having the audition. When I returned from the audition Bessie was all a-twitter and greeted me radiantly, she was so sure that I would have exciting news. Would I take a cup of tea and some cinnamon toast? I would not. Would I have a glass of milk, or a cup of soup?—No, I wanted only to be alone and to mope about with my conflicting emotions. For three days I stayed at home, and “watchful waiting” was the order of every minute. For I still cherished the hope of a letter, telegram or telephone message from the Opera House. Bessie with unflinching devotion, practiced her culinary art to a degree and placed before me the most tempting viands. But I had no appetite and slept little.

On the fourth day, the need of fresh air forced me into the open and I took a long walk on Riverside Drive. Several of the big battleships were in the Hudson River, and a hospital ship was at anchor near the Jersey side. Little boats were making trips to the mother ships and carrying our sailors to and from the shore. War was in the air, the sky was gray, the battleships were gray, the river was gray and I was blue. Leaning on the parapet which ran along the river, I went into a soliloquy along these lines—

What an ungrateful cuss you are, to even entertain the thought that you are hurt and disappointed. What do *you* know of hurts or disappointments? The mothers, wives and sweethearts of our sailors and soldiers could tell you what that is all about. Death, disease, and poverty are riding high, wide and handsome. The ugly war specters are moving fast and furious and in the midst of this wholesale devastation you are living mostly with one vain thought for yourself. Do you hear that bugle call from the ship? Well, it is telling you to get into line. Stop dreaming about your little self, turn your energies into constructive avenues and help to win this war. Of course, you have bought Liberty Bonds, entertained at the Camps and rolled bandages, but none of these activi-

ties entailed a real sacrifice. And this kind of help can be rendered by women with children, who are obliged to remain at home. But you have no obligation other than to answer the call. Go down tomorrow to the Automobile School for Drivers. You are a post-graduate in the knowledge of decrepit motors and patched tires, and with two months' driving lessons you should make a decent recruit for ambulance service.

And with this decision firmly in mind, I turned my steps homeward. I felt lighter and brighter and calm was seeping in, where disturbance wanted to reign. Resignation has its compensation.

When I entered my apartment I nearly had a head-on collision with Bessie. The dear soul was wildly waving a piece of paper and virtually pushing me to the telephone. She said that in my absence, a foreign gentleman had telephoned, his name was Mr. Villa and I was to call the written number as soon as possible. One glance at the paper told me that the telephone number was that of the Opera House. Mr. Villa, I learned, was Mr. Gatti's private secretary. And stewing in my own brew of nerves, I called the Opera House to find that Mr. Gatti wished to see me at two o'clock on the following day.

Jay and Madame von Ende insisted that I would receive a contract. I refused to let myself believe it, and throughout that night and the next morning I put more than one quietus on my runaway hopes.

At breakfast I talked Jay out of a new white fox fur. I argued that the white fox, then much *à la mode*, would make a finishing touch to my costume. And it nearly did, for that May day was made for suffocation. Some say that fashion is spinach and I say that it can be Hell too. And when sane women stagger around under furs, with the thermometer running to tropical heat, it is time that we rebelled at this slavery. But there I was, true to the vanity of my sex, and as comfortable as an Eskimo at the Equator.

Mr. Villa escorted me to the Sanctum Sanctorum, where Mr. Gatti greeted me and offered me the opposite chair at his desk. The formalities were over in about ten minutes and ran along these lines:

Mr. Gatti: "Mr. Caruso tells me that you are very anxious to become a member of the Metropolitan Opera Company, and that you would like to sing small parts—"

"Yes, Mr. Gatti, that would make me very happy."

"I have a contract here, for you, for three seasons."

Mr. Villa was hovering by with a pen in his hand. And with only one thought, to get my name on that contract, which Mr. Gatti had pushed toward me, I reached for the pen.

Mr. Gatti, suppressing a smile, said, "Don't you want to read it?" I agreed that that seemed advisable and skimming through the clauses I found the one where my salary was mentioned. The weekly amount was nothing short of a pittance, with increases in the second and third year. I ventured to remark that I thought the salary was very small.

"Yes," said Mr. Gatti, "I do pay small salaries to young artists, but do you realize, my dear, that many a Park Avenue debutante would pay me big money for the contract I am offering you? But *no* one pays Gatti, I always pay my artists, no matter how small the amount."

And now I quickly reached for the pen and signed the contract. With a formal thank you and good-by, I again found myself on 39th Street, but this time I was hugging to my heart a three year contract, a priceless achievement for me.

I was terribly happy and hurried to a telephone booth to talk with Jay and then with Madame. And in my supreme satisfaction I told myself that the combined fortunes of Carnegie and Rockefeller could not buy that contract. I felt rich beyond computation.

My old friend Marie was about demoralized with joy at my

attainment. In vain I repeated to her that I was only a secondary artist, but she would hear none of it. She had glorified me into stardom and from that day Marie always called me the Prima Donna.

When calm descended upon me I re-read my contract to find that my engagement with the company was for one year only. But the company had an option on my services for three years. This as Madame rightly explained, meant that I should have to work as I had never done before. It would be better far to have never entered the Opera than to find myself dismissed at the end of the first season. Such a dismissal would be a public acknowledgment of the fact that I had fallen below the standards and was of no use in Mr. Gatti's organization.

The contract called for I think seventeen roles, in French, German, and Italian, these roles to be ready the following November. The roles went from one line parts like "James, the carriage awaits," through all the secondary parts, the fattest plum being Musetta, in *La Bohème*. There was a summer's task before me and much planning to do, for I had no money to pay an opera coach.

With the ever growing hatred for Germany and everything German, that language was disbarred at the Opera House and the beautiful Wagnerian operas were being sung in English, if you could so call it. For the translations were ridiculous, inadequate and unsingable. But with my limited knowledge of German, this arrangement was to my advantage, for I could study the German roles in my own tongue. Within one year I had to unlearn the English versions and re-study the parts in German—nice work, that is!

I engaged to take two lessons a week in the Italian language, at a price of one dollar and fifty cents a lesson. My teacher was a genteel Italian lady named Buccini and she was sympathetic and helpful.

I had had four years of French at Old St. John's Academy and with Madame's exquisite Parisian French, we could easily work out that part of my repertoire. Madame could play the piano with the right hand, and her left hand would usually fall upon a harmonizing chord. So we outlined the parts in her studio and then I trudged home to pound them out on my own piano, and thank God that I could play.

That was a hot summer and Sally Rand had nothing on me for costume, except that her fan was larger! I had to close my windows to appease the long-suffering neighbors. And on many a scorching day with fan in hand and a Gandhi outfit, I paraded through my apartment—memorizing my roles.

On October first we made a change in our home life, which I always regretted, but at that time it seemed advisable. Because of my oncoming rehearsals at the Opera, my great distance from the scene of my work and Jay's inevitable call to war service, we decided to give up our apartment and move to a hotel.

We took an unfurnished suite at the St. Hubert Hotel on West 57th Street, which was within walking distance of the Opera House. This move cost me my dear English Bessie and we parted with hugs and sobs. But Bessie called on me later; we had tea together and I gave her a seat to hear *Carmen* in which Geraldine Farrar sang the leading role. I was singing the gypsy girl, Frasquita, and Bessie told me later that she saw only me, and that I was the loveliest thing on the stage. Deep affection and loyalty have blinded more than one honest soul, and Bessie had willingly succumbed to her blindness.

Our rooms at the hotel were sizeable and artistic and when Jay said that he would buy me a Steinway Baby Grand piano, my cup of happiness was indeed filled. I had gone to Steinway's three times to pick out the instrument and when it was finally delivered, I was dizzy with the joy of its possession. I touched the lovely

smooth ebony case, I walked around it and opened and closed it and told myself that it was really mine.

And what should I play for the first number, well, I could not make up my mind. I had lost my beloved father two weeks previous and I finally decided to play and sing his favorite song. He would never hear me at the Opera, and maybe he could hear me now.

I got through about six bars of Annie Laurie and memories of our old piano, and happy singing days at home kept crowding in, and threatening to wreck my happy day. No, I must wait for Jay to come home, then we could call Marie and her husband and have music which was gay and befitting the occasion—it was another occasion for me.

There was no next draft, for on November 11, 1918, the Armistice was declared and strangely enough on that same day I was called to my first rehearsal at the Metropolitan Opera House! And what a day that was! Clutching my score under my arm and pushing hither and yon, I fought my way through the hysterical crowds on Broadway. I foolishly worried that I would be late. A sailor kissed me and a drunken pedestrian waltzed me around Times Square. Pandemonium reigned and I was whirled around in the joyous crowd.

I lost my hat and finding it again I tucked it under my coat. I must save it, I could not enter the dignified portals of the Opera House without a hat!

At last disheveled and worn out I arrived at the little office of the Metropolitan and found the genial, gracious Miss Morton at the desk—she is still there and what an interesting story she could write. A story of the budding artist who came to conquer the singing world and remained for one short season of disillusionment. And of the many secondary artists who in ignorance of their own limitations, have stayed on and on until frustration has left them

steeped in jealousy and bitterness. For, to the high places many are called, but few are chosen. Miss Morton could tell of gala performances, brilliant audiences and auspicious debuts. And there could be interesting gossip of incipient liaisons and of love affairs that had galloped into culmination and sometimes scandal. But this wise soul never talked and perhaps this discreet silence has much to do with her long term of office.

Introducing myself to Miss Morton, I told her that I had a three o'clock rehearsal with the French conductor, Mr. Pelletier. Miss Morton looked at me and I know that she was thinking that this new artist must be a dimwit. She didn't tell me that, but she did laugh and reminded me that it was Armistice Day and said that there were no conductors and for that matter no one else on the premises! Everyone had run out of the place at eleven that morning. I thanked Miss Morton and tried to exit with nonchalance. This day was a red-letter day for me too, and although I was happy for the Armistice, I nursed a secret disappointment at missing my first Metropolitan rehearsal.

I knew later that a private rehearsal meant only a period of coaching and study for me. But the ensemble rehearsals, orchestra rehearsals and dress rehearsals were to be an ever increasing joy. And now in retrospect, I can say that those rehearsals with the jocund company of my fellow-artists have made for high spots on my simple landscape.



## *Part Two*



## VIII

### STARS AND REHEARSALS

AND NOW I find myself a working member of the Metropolitan Opera Company and in reminiscing I see that about this time the pattern of my life began to change again.

Prior to my engagement at the Opera, it seems to me that I was like an unused harp, standing in a corner of the back parlor. A few, in passing had plucked at my strings and perhaps even struck some responding chords. But I had not been really played upon and had never vibrated to capacity.

Now I was out of the back parlor and had moved into the orchestra of Life. I was in daily communication with artistic personalities, working hard it is true, but in a new aura of learning and enchantment. My design for living was being enlarged and deepened. Many attractive flourishes were creeping in, fine lines, through contact and conviction were to become firm and definite ones, and many angles and square-cut corners were being molded into soft curves. Life became abundantly interesting, and to add to its completeness, my good husband was now established in his own business and we were enjoying financial ease.

Jay always insisted that I had made his success, and I, in turn, declared that my musical step into the Opera was greatly due to Jay's sympathetic co-operation with my efforts. I believe that both these statements are true, for we always worked together.

Jay and my friends boasted loud and long about my being a Metropolitan Star. This misnomer is often applied to a young artist who is at the threshold of operatic art. And this misnomer is a

liability to the artist, and a source of disappointment to the audience. The stars in the heavens are set in high places and have five points. And real Metropolitan Stars, as I have known them, are usually so equipped, from the beginning.

There are but few records of the young artist, male or female, who entered the Metropolitan with one or no points on his star, and who en route to stardom, added the other four points. In my time at the Opera, the most spectacular rise from small parts to stardom, was in the case of Lawrence Tibbett. His tremendous and instantaneous success, threw him into first place. A star was born that night and his continued artistic achievements only prove that his call to the heights was a deserved one.

But there are many records of an operatic fledgling whose hallucinations have endowed her with the five points. And these points are often removed with one operation in her first season, and the fluttering bird slips quietly into her proper place. There are stubborn cases of course, where the so-called Metropolitan Star is aggravated by the protests of friends and relations. They insist that she is a Goddess of Song and that stardom is her birthright. The general management treats these cases with slower but deathlike potions; salaries are cut, few appearances are given, small insignificant roles are thrust upon the hopeful one. And gradually it dawns upon her that she is a cog in the wheel, a useful artist in a company of brilliant stars. The stars travel in their own orbits and the second artist shines mostly by reflected glory.

In 1918 there was in the Metropolitan Opera Company a superb trinity of artists, Caruso, Farrar and Scotti. There were other artists of splendid ability and recognized fame, but I like to remember that my sojourn with the company was during the regime of these three luminaries. Caruso held sway among the tenors, Scotti was the popular baritone and the fascinating and scintillating Farrar reigned as queen among the sopranos. That I was fortunate enough

to enjoy an intimate friendship with each of them, is a very precious page in my memory book.

The routine of the secondary artist is a rather strenuous one. A typical day would run like this—

10:00 A.M.: Piano rehearsal with Italian conductor.

12:00 Noon: Piano rehearsal with French conductor.

3:30 P.M.: Piano rehearsal with German conductor.

And this busy day is often followed by a performance that night, if you happen to be in the cast of that evening's opera. The next day you may have a stage or orchestra rehearsal from 10:30 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. This may be followed by a piano rehearsal at 4:00 P.M., and again an evening performance. This is no work for sluggards, but arduous as it was, it was also replete with interest for me. I was blissfully happy in my chosen niche.

When I was with the company for about two weeks I was called to a Sunday afternoon piano rehearsal. The opera was Puccini's *Suor Angelica* and Geraldine Farrar was singing the role of Sister Angelica. I took my place in the rehearsal room and sat alone on one side of the room. I enjoyed the chatter of the other artists, and their exchange of theater gossip, while we waited for the conductor.

There appeared in the doorway a vision of loveliness in the person of Miss Farrar. She wore a beautiful blue velvet gown, with a picture hat of the same color and carried on her arm a sable coat. Greeting the other girls cordially, there were no men in that cast, Miss Farrar sat about opposite me. Of course, I glanced at my stage idol, telling myself that she was equally stunning in this elegant afternoon costume. To my surprise, Miss Farrar crossed the room and stood before me. I must have been momentarily petrified for I did not have the gumption to rise from my chair.

"Aren't you Mary Mellish, the new singer?" she said.

"Yes, I am."

"I am Miss Farrar."

At this point, I should have used our now popular slang expression—"You're telling me!"

Instead of which I quietly replied,

"Yes, I know you are."

Then extending her hand, this lovely person said,

"I want to welcome you to the company and I hope that you will be very happy here."

I muttered my thanks and sank back to wonder at the simple graciousness of this great artist. It so happened that I was often cast for small roles in Miss Farrar's repertoire of the French and Italian operas. And coming in frequent contact with her, I grew to know and love her. In my third season at the Opera, when I was invited to a party at her home and later to a reception at her mother's home, I felt privileged indeed. Twenty years is a long span of time, and presupposing that one is familiar with the subject at hand, an opinion on that same subject can not be entirely discounted. So I now offer the humble opinion that Geraldine Farrar is a super-woman. Had she not been gifted with a beautiful voice and stupendous musical talents, the world would still have heard from her. In any field of endeavor her other endowments would have brought her to the high places. A dynamic personality, with beauty, wit and charm to spare, a keen intellect and finely balanced mind, an inexhaustive capacity for work, these are points to reckon with, and Miss Farrar has them all. Unlike many a retired prima donna, there is no trace of bitterness in her cup; she is today, as sweet and wholesome as the full blown roses in her garden.

My first rehearsal on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera was in Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète*, with Caruso as John of Leyden and Margaret Matzenauer as his mother. I sang the role of a small choir boy in the Cathedral. This was not my debut, but an op-

portunity, Mr. Gatti said, to become familiar with the immensity of the stage and possibly help to eliminate stage fright.

*Le Prophète* is a profoundly moving opera, with a beautiful story, a most expressive orchestration and interesting stage settings. Mr. Caruso had made the role of John quite beyond competition and it was many years after his death before another tenor dared to take over the role.

I reported at rehearsal for my few singing lines and sat in the orchestra until my call would come. I had never heard *Le Prophète* and as I sat there listening to that lovely work unfold, I thought then, and I still think, that small as my weekly salary was, I should have passed it back to Mr. Gatti, in exchange for the privilege of being a member of the company. After all, I a habitue of the top gallery, was occupying a front seat in the orchestra. I was hob-nobbing with great artists and like a gourmet I was devouring the musical feast. This too, was without worry or expense on my part, and my bliss was complete.

The late Mr. Bodanzky was the conductor and I had been told that he was a hell-cat with the artists and to beware of one musical mistake!

Let others call him that, I found him inspirational and believe it or not, friendly. But, and this is important, I was always a good musician, even he would have told you that. I played a game of bridge with the late Artur Bodanzky not so long ago and that was the only time that I have been able to talk back to him !

At this rehearsal, I saw a little tantrum which I must record because my story is one of impressions.

There is a scene of a beautiful skating party in Holland. It is picturesque and the score carries the skaters on their merry way. A moon appeared in the sky and I was entranced with the whole picture.

Suddenly Bodanzky stopped the orchestra and screamed—with

his ever present accent—"Vy comes up the moon now? Vere is the electrician? In my score the moon comes up in bar 134 and now three bars before you give me the moon! Take that moon away!" Much consultation ensued with the chief electrician, and finally everything seemed adjusted.

The orchestra and singers began again, the rehearsal proceeded and the moon appeared at the right moment!

This was a revelation to me, for often as I had been on the outside looking in, now I was inside, and learning the details and importance of rehearsals. I never dreamed that the chief electrician had a musical score and that the score was marked for all lighting effects. When the sun or moon or stars or any interesting phenomena appeared, I had just taken it for granted. The switchboard backstage is amazing and the competent corps of electricians have much to do with perfection in the performance.

The first performance of *Le Prophète* took place on a Saturday afternoon. Several friends wanted to see me on the stage for the first time and talked of buying seats. But I gave fair warning to them, that finding me in that big scene would be like locating the needle in a haystack. And as for my singing, I was one of four choir boys who would pipe out a few lines announcing The Prophet, John of Leyden. Nevertheless, I described my costume with the hope that I would be seen, if not heard.

I wore a brown cassock, a white surplice and a short auburn wig. I dressed and made up in a room with the three other choir boys, Marie Tiffany, Cecil Arden and Minnie Egener.

They were cordial to me and Tiffany remarked that I put the grease paints on artistically, she said she guessed that I would do. Her remark was meant to be both complimentary and encouraging and I took it as such.

Marie was sophisticated, soigné and artistic to her finger tips. We became friends, and in that friendship Marie led me into many

by-paths and opened for me new vistas which were to broaden and beautify my design for living.

As we left the dressing room, Marie cautioned me to stay close, lest I be lost before our entrance. For the crowd back stage with whom we were soon mingling, was something to reckon with. There were soldiers, officers, peasants and other townspeople, all in their colorful costumes, and there seemed to be hundreds of them. They were the chorus people. There was a hushed confusion, as they lined up for different entrances, the stage manager passing among them, giving the quiet order for "Silence."

We took our places near an entrance to the Cathedral and as we stood there I saw walking toward us Enrico Caruso, not the jolly Caruso of the Hotel Knickerbocker, but a profoundly serious and magnificent artist, The Prophet, John of Leyden.

His costume was elegant, his make-up unbelievably beautiful and his whole manner and expression were distinctly spiritual—he was in his part. I turned away for a few moments, and when he stood before us, about eight feet away, I could not resist the temptation to look at him. I found that he was gazing directly at me. It was only an instant that our eyes met, but in that time we had exchanged a message. I thought that he said to me, "Well, here you are, where you so wanted to be, I hope you are happy." And I know that I said to him, "I am terribly happy today, and thank you and God bless you."

I believed then and still do believe in telepathic conversations. I have sent messages and received them with uncanny accuracy. Of course, the two parties to such messages must necessarily be attuned, whether along physical, mental, or spiritual lines. And the more diversified the antennae which one throws out, the better is the resulting hook-up. With concentration and sensitivity, you cannot fail to make a contact and the message comes not "out of a clear sky" but from one's own power to send or receive it. If you have

never experimented along these lines, I recommend it as an interesting endeavor. And in my tests I have found that favorite places and certain times lend themselves to a more propitious medium.

For direct contacts with God the lines are always open and are so widely varied, that one has but to choose. Many people prefer to commune with God in churches and I find that good for them, but not for me. I get too much static and interference. I prefer the open spaces and get excellent reception when I walk through my woods. And that goes for any day or night in the three hundred and sixty-five.

For love messages between the sexes, try a rainy afternoon, about cocktail time, or any night when the moon is full. And I have had marvelous results from soft music, the reading of poetry, gazing into a log fire, and the dusting of beloved books.

If you must send an ugly message to a careless stock broker, an exacting lawyer or some quarrelsome relatives do not waste time. Start early in the morning, on the toilet or in your bath. Shoot your message through quickly so as not to spoil the whole day.

And while I am talking of conversations through vibrations, I am reminded that the fleeting glance which passed between Mr. Caruso and myself that day, marked our last meeting. I never again happened to be cast in his repertoire, and saw him but a few times when he was passing through the Opera House.

He was usually escorting the beautiful Dorothy Benjamin, who shortly afterwards became Mrs. Caruso. I have Christmas cards from both of them and a sweet note from Dorothy Caruso thanking me for a Bon Voyage telegram when they sailed for Italy.

Mussolini may march and tyrannize new peoples, but long after his goose-step has ceased to echo, a world-wide and loving public will remember and revere the great art of Enrico Caruso.

While studying my roles that summer I had picked for my debut the role of Frasquita in *Carmen*—I had fallen in love with the lilting gay music.

Madame von Ende was afraid of the Frasquita, the trio was not easy, the quintette decidedly difficult and the stage business demanded a knowledge of *mise-en-scène*. I could easily run into disaster.

So we were both relieved when the management announced to me that I would debut in the role of the Princess Xenia, in *Boris Godounoff*.

To the artist who makes a debut as Mimi in *Bohème*, or Marguerite in *Faust*, the role of Princess Xenia is a pitiful entrance into Grand Opera. But I have agreed more than once with Einstein's theory of relativity, if it makes any difference to that illustrious man. And I was grateful not to be a page, or a shepherd boy, or a priestess behind the scenes. I was to wear a gorgeous Russian costume, sing a solo of a page and a half, a lovely Russian theme, which opens the second act of the Opera. Furthermore, when the curtain rises on this second act, there are only two people on the stage, Princess Xenia, sung by me, and my nurse, at that time interpreted by the lovely Flora Perini, a seasoned member of the company. My exulting friends could now hear and see me, even if for a short time.

On the debut night, I had a dressing room to myself. There were telegrams and flowers and I felt like a prima donna. When I had finished my make-up, the old hair-dresser came in, and adjusted my beautiful blonde wig. There were two long golden braids which he said should hang in front, one over each shoulder.

Then came the dresser, a vivacious garrulous Italian woman. I have heard that she is now a wardrobe mistress in Hollywood. She was not young then and that she could last long enough to make Hollywood, is a marvel. She bedecked me in the regal garb of the Princess and placed upon my head an ornate Russian head-dress.

I looked in the mirror at a frightened stranger. I had had no stage or orchestra rehearsal and had never seen the opera. The stage manager had told me where to sit, when to stand, how to turn to greet my father Boris, and when and where to exit.

I could hear the gorgeous Russian orchestration and the chorus, out front. Realizing that I would soon be a part of it all, I decided to vocalize a little. I sang some scales quietly, and then went through my tiny aria. When I finished singing, there was a knock at my door, and there stood a queenly and beautiful woman, who was singing the leading female role, the Princess Marina. "I beg your pardon," she said, "I am Louise Homer. I see that you are making your debut tonight and I have been listening to your singing. If I may advise you, do not use any more voice than you have used in this room. Your voice is fresh and lovely and if you force, you will lose some of the quality. The acoustics of this house are marvelous and your voice will carry to every part of the auditorium." I thanked her and she wished me success.

You may believe that Madame Homer's kindly interest and encouraging remarks helped to give me assurance. That was the first of many gracious acts to come my way and it was not long until I was adopted back-stage and found myself in the bosom of that artistic family—and in those days, what a happy family it was.

The call came for me to come on stage. In the first act my brother Theodor and I appear with our Father Boris, before the Palace. Adam Didur was King Boris and Raymonde Delaunois was singing the unhappy Prince Theodor. We stood on a high platform, with the crowd of howling, surging, wild Russians beneath us. King Boris was singing and placating the crowd when one of the supposed Russians, standing at my feet, looked up and said, "You look grand, kid, a real Princess—I wish you good luck." A fellow next to him said, "Some blonde hair—have you a date after the show?" And there were one or two other flippant remarks, audible only to me.

I was terrified and looked straight ahead of me into that sea of faces in the auditorium. When we left the Palace steps and made our exit, I turned to Delaunois and said—"What kind of a chorus is this, there is no discipline. I thought these men were Italians and they spoke to me in English—it is very upsetting."

"Oh," said Delaunois, with her delightful French accent, "these are not the Chorus, these are the super (supers)."

"What are the super?" I asked.

"The super are men who cannot to pay for opera. When we need extra crowds, these men come and stand outside at the stage door. The management calls them in and engage them for one dollar fifty cents and they hear opera and make money. They are doctors and lawyers and many come from Columbia College. But they are very fresh, and I will tell to the stage manager."

The second act found me on the big stage, with my nurse, Perini. She was sitting at one side before her embroidery table. The curtain had not gone up and we were waiting for Papi, the conductor, to take his place in the orchestra pit. I looked at Perini, whom I did not know, and saw her hurriedly make the sign of the cross. I realized that she was praying and was terribly nervous. I wondered why she had nerves, she had been several years at the opera. I felt fairly calm. Didn't I know my music, and wasn't I going to sing it as beautifully as I could—what more was there to it?

My placidity was akin to that of a cow, and my nervous system at that time must have been strung up along the same lines. I sang my role, and was back in my dressing room before I realized it had happened. My notices were good, and the usual ones given for a small debut. "She had a fresh lovely voice, made a charming Princess and the critics would wait for further appearances to judge her artistic worth."

But if I entered upon that stage without nerves, I picked up a grand case of them, then and there. For in seven seasons, and I

often sang three or four times a week, I never went to a performance without the sickening sensation of nerves.

These thoughts keep crowding one's mind and the motor nerves seem to prefer the pit of one's stomach for the stopping place. In some unhappy cases the bowels are affected. My throat is parched and dry, I am taking a cold. I feel a tickling in my throat, I think I am getting hoarse. I feel intestinal gas, or perhaps I ate something which has disagreed with me. Suppose I can't get my breath, maybe the voice won't come out at all. Wouldn't it be frightful if I should crack on a high note. These and other disconcerting phenomena are particularly common to singers. The symptoms usually disappear as soon as the singer faces her audience, and finds that the voice is in working order.

I once asked if public pianists and violinists had nerves. Yes, indeed. It seems that a pianist has icy cold hands, and his knees tremble—he lives in fear that the pedals will not respond to the shaking knees. The violinist suffers in his bowing arm, the dancer in her feet and conductors have neuritis in the arms and shoulders.

The social side of my debut was negligible. Mother was prostrated over the recent death of my father and remained in Albany. My sister Nan was in the last days of pregnancy, and was making no public appearances. An aunt and my oldest brother came from Albany. Madame and Jay sat together holding hands and praying, they afterwards told me. Marie and her husband occupied front seats and there was a scattering of friends in the audience. After the performance we repaired to our hotel and partook of some cocktails, hotel chicken salad and coffee—and so to bed.

At twelve o'clock the next day, I received a telephone call saying that Mr. Gatti would like to see me at two o'clock that same day.

I knew this to be an unusual procedure, and I was thoroughly frightened. What had I done! Was my contract to be cancelled? What could it all mean? Mr. Gatti saw me alone in his office to

inform me that the late Reginald de Koven, then a critic on one of our leading newspapers, had been present at my debut. Mr. de Koven had written a new light opera, "The Road to Yesterday," and the Shuberts were to produce it. They had been searching a prima donna for the lead, and de Koven said his search was over the minute I left the stage.

Mr. Gatti said, "Now, cara, we want you with us, but you will be offered much more money than I can ever pay you, and you must make your own decision. The situation has to be handled with diplomacy, and I have already told Mr. de Koven that you will see him this afternoon. Last season we produced de Koven's *Canterbury Pilgrims*; it was not a success and there was controversy between de Koven, myself and the Board of Directors. I wish to remain friends with de Koven and cannot refuse to let him interview one of my artists. I think I know what your decision will be, but I must give you a free hand and keep out of the picture."

I assured Mr. Gatti that I was remaining with the Metropolitan and with a pat on my cheek, Mr. Gatti said, "Va bene" (that is well.)

The appointment was made by Mr. Gatti's secretary and at four o'clock I appeared at the Shubert offices, to meet de Koven, J. J. Shubert and Mr. Simmons. Mr. de Koven was surprised to find me a decided brunette, he was looking for the golden hair of Princess Xenia. But that was a small matter. He liked my voice and my type, and asked if I would be gracious enough to sing for Mr. Shubert. I had brought no music, but Mr. Simmons, excellent musician that he was, found a score of *Romeo and Juliet*, and to his splendid accompaniment, I sang the Waltz Song from that opera.

The verdict was unanimous. A Broadway star had been found, and I was to create the leading role in *The Road to Yesterday*. I refused the contract with as much tact as I could summon and reminded Mr. Shubert that it was not yet twenty-four hours since I had made my debut.

Mr. Shubert, in turn, put on a sales talk, guaranteed to wear me down, but to no effect. He depicted the life of the small artist in the Metropolitan; she was always underpaid, there was the drudgery of rehearsals, she had no chance for self-expression and usually stayed with the company until she was old and fat and the velvet had left her voice. He cited cases of Mabel Garrison and the late Sophie Breslau. They had made debuts in small parts and had been lost in the shuffle, so he said. Now, to me, both of these admirable artists had and were at the time enjoying enviable careers. They were Victor artists and had a beloved concert following throughout the country. I could wish for nothing better than to attain the high artistic places they then occupied. Mr. Shubert offered me headlights on Broadway and a weekly salary which completely staggered me, but to no avail. With profound thanks, and to Mr. de Koven's keen disappointment, I resolved to follow my chosen path.

And there were never any regrets, for neither money nor Broadway fame could ever compensate for the glorious music, of which I was but a small part, and the illuminating and lovable artists who were to become my life-long friends.

In my seven years at the Opera, the Shuberts approached me three times and the last time I unhappily surrendered and joined their ranks—but more of that later.

## IX

### TRICKS OF THE TRADE

IN DECEMBER, 1919, there was a gala performance at the Opera. *L'Oiseau Bleu* (The Blue Bird) with the book by Maeterlinck and the music by our talented French conductor Albert Wolff, was to have its World Premiere. The patrons of the performance were Their Majesties, the King and Queen of Belgium, and the President of the French Republic. The benefit was for the Queen of Belgium's Milk Fund, the French Milk Fund and Milk for the Children of America.

Orchestra seats sold for fifteen dollars at the box office, late shoppers paying twenty-five and fifty dollars to the speculators. Boxes ran as high as five hundred dollars and elaborate souvenir programs sold for one dollar or whatever amount you chose to give the debutantes who were selling them. We had rehearsed day and night, the score was modern and difficult and excitement was running high as the date drew near.

Tyltyl, was the boy, Raymonde Delaunois. Mytyl the girl was played by Mary Ellis, later of Rose-Marie fame. And Florence Easton our brilliant star sang the role of Maternal Love.

The cast was huge, nearly thirty, and because of this, some of the girls, including me, were obliged to dress on the 39th Street side, in the men's dressing rooms.

The dressing rooms in the Opera House were then and still are, entirely inadequate and the few cubbyhole toilets are but a slight improvement over the Chic Sales arrangement. Be that as it may, opera goes on and there is no reason why the placid audience

should at any time be disturbed by the inconvenience of the performers.

I had a good role in the production. I was singing the role of *Happiness* and although the souvenir program carried only nine artists' photographs, mine was among them.

I mention this because I was with the Company but a short time and to have my presence there even recognized, no doubt added to the nervous tension which nearly turned my performance into a diabolical fiasco!

My costume was a beautiful one, with white silk tights; they must have been designed by Houdini. Over these tights were yards and yards of billowy white chiffon. I wore silver slippers, a silver headpiece, and long silver curls.

Into my garden of Happiness come Mytyl and Tytyl, carrying the empty cage and searching for The Blue Bird of Happiness! I explain to the children that they have left at home priceless happiness, which they have overlooked. And I proceed to introduce to them the characters who represent the happiness of Bread, Water, Milk, Sugar, Light, Fire, the Dog, the Cat, the Night and then the greatest of all happiness, Maternal Love.

And now dawns the morning of the dress rehearsal at 10:30 on the coldest day I can remember. To the dress rehearsals come the critics, en masse, and their verdicts of the performance are generally written at the dress rehearsal. And to this rehearsal there came by invitation many persons of high standing in the social and financial world.

Four girls dressed in a room, which seemed just above freezing temperature and many were the maledictions that we hurled upon the general management. As a matter of fact, these rooms were never comfortably heated until noon, and in the evening due to poor ventilation, they were suffocating. So with hands and feet cold and my teeth chattering, the dresser finally encased me in the

white silk tights. The lovely chiffon draperies were arranged. I could hear the change of scene below and I knew that I had about twelve minutes before my entrance on stage.

With no warning, I was taken with violent cramps in the bowels. The panic communicated itself to my sympathetic companions, but Marie Tiffany took the situation in hand.

"Are you joking?" she demanded. "This is no time for nonsense; you will soon be on the stage."

"I assure you, Marie, that I never was more serious in my life, —something has to be done."

"Well," said Marie, "let's not stand here and talk about it." Reaching for a scissors she told me to stoop over and then she instructed the girls to hold high my chiffon over-dress. And like a competent surgeon plunging his knife, Marie cut a long slit in the seat of my tights. . . .

At this point the girls were in hysterical laughter, but I wanted to cry. Afterward there was no time for mending or sewing and with anger, humiliation, sickening nerves and slit pants, I heard the call:

"Miss Mellish on stage."

My role called for a happy personality and gathering my remaining wits into line, I made a gay and nonchalant entrance into the Garden of Happiness! And, of course, I made prayers to all the Saints that be and with results, for the slit did not become enlarged and I escaped further catastrophe.

When the curtain fell, I was amazed to see standing in the wings several of my fellow-artists and two members of the business staff—they had come to peek. The episode was too good to keep and one of the girls had spread the news.

They insisted that their vigilance had been rewarded for it seems that the strong stage lights passed right through the flimsy draperies and as I cavorted about in blissful ignorance, the outline of my

body was in bold relief. I laughed with them and took it on the chin, but at every following performance of *The Blue Bird*, there were sure to be some "Peeping Toms" in the wings.

At the gala performance on December 27th, I went through smoothly, but I was witness to a scene which I shall long remember.

Mme. Florence Easton had just buried her only daughter, a beautiful child of eleven years. Mr. Gatti had given Mme. Easton a ten day vacation and the first role she was called to sing was Maternal Love in *The Blue Bird*. We all loved Mme. Easton and felt for her loss as a family. We knew that her scene and her aria were harrowing at this time and we hoped that she could go through without a break.

She entered the Garden of Happiness and several adorable ballet children followed her, clinging to her skirts. I introduced her to Tytyl and Mytyl who confided to her that they were searching for the Blue Bird. Mme. Easton, gathering the little ones around her, sang to Tytyl and Mytyl and told them that the greatest happiness in the world is Mother Love.

As she began the aria, I saw two huge tears fall to the floor. And as she sang and petted the children, there were more tears slowly rolling off her grease paint. I suffered with her and wondered if she could go on. With inward sobs and shaking body, she sang to the bitter end of the aria. Happily, there was an immediate curtain and Mme. Easton fled to her dressing room.

The curtain went up for applause and as we stood there listening to the applause, my eyes drifted to the little pool of tears on the stage floor. Mme. Easton did not appear, the curtain was lowered, the stage-manager dashed to her dressing room.

The curtain was raised again, but Mme. Easton refused to come out. She was on the verge of collapse and was sobbing beyond control. Very few, if any, in that audience knew what was happening. And I learned then and there, that a great artist is always resource-

ful and that his or her personal feelings never mar a performance—the show must go on!

Raphael Diaz, one of our young tenors, was a splendid artist and a valued member of the company for many years. He was a marvelous story-teller and when he chose to be the raconteur, we would gather around him, well assured of hilarious entertainment.

He tells this story on himself—

“Once we were giving a performance of *Marouf* in Brooklyn. Mario Chamlee was singing *Marouf* and I had the second tenor role. The private boxes in the Brooklyn Academy of Music are not all in upper tiers, several of them are on the orchestra floor and adjoining the stage.

“There is a sweet pastoral scene in *Marouf*, a donkey is quietly grazing upstage and I walk from him downstage to sing my one and only aria. It is a lovely bit of singing and had always earned applause.

“On this fatal night, I had begun my aria and was moving toward the footlights. I had only sung a few phrases, when I thought I heard a titter of laughter in the audience. I continued to sing and the laughter, now of well defined volume, was coming from all parts of the house. I glanced at the conductor for help, but he was smiling and looking in every direction but mine.

“Panic seized me, everything went black before my eyes. Of course, I said, they are laughing at me and my singing. Shall I run into the wings or stay and face it? And with sickening fear I finished the aria. There was some applause, but it was lost in the rollicking laughter.

“And turning to make my exit I saw the cause of it all. The damn donkey, excited either by the music or his own base passions, had wandered down to the first private box. At first glance he appeared to have *five* legs, perhaps that was my feverish imagina-

tion. His right front leg was resting on the plush rim of the box and the foolish animal was curiously peering into the faces of the hysterical occupants.

"I can laugh at it now, but the agony of those few minutes was excruciating and I was sure that the bell had rung for me!"

There was an organization of Italian handclappers at the Opera House and they were known as "The Claque." I had heard of their doings before I became a member of the Company, but I had refused to believe that well organized applauders could be bought and paid for. Even in my small capacity, the claque leader approached me in my second season at the Opera.

I was billed to appear in a Sunday night concert. Young artists who aim to enter the concert field are pleased with these appearances. While they carry no extra caché the singing horizon is broadened and one meets a new public. The leader of the claque telephoned and in broken English advised that I secure the services of the claque for the forthcoming Sunday concert. These claquers obtain advance billings from the Opera House, so they are thoroughly informed as to the artist's appearances.

I told the leader that I proposed to sing and take my chances on the applause. He was insistent that I see him and solely for curiosity, I made an appointment for him at my apartment.

He came at the exact hour, oily in manner and appearance and badly in need of tonsorial care. Upon learning that I was to sing Micaela's aria from *Carmen*, he began to hum a few bars, to convince me that he knew his music. He said that his followers would carefully watch for my last high B flat, would break in upon it at the most propitious instant, and start the applause. These extraordinary services would cost me fifty dollars, to be paid in advance.

He warned me that as a new singer in the Company, I was neg-

lecting to take advantage of this means of becoming popular. I insisted that I believed I could carry on without being separated from fifty dollars. But I worried after he left me and prayed to God that the claue members would not hiss and boo at my aria.

The Sunday night concert went very well, the paid applauders ignored me and sustaining friends blistered their hands in my behalf.

On three other occasions the claue master approached me and the fourth time, being scared to death, I fell into his trap and parted with fifty hard earned dollars. His first fee had been one hundred dollars but I talked him down to fifty and now I suspect that a paltry twenty-five would have consummated the deal.

The occasion was my first appearance in the role of Musetta in *La Bohème*. Gigli was singing Rudolfo, Bori was Mimi and Scotti was Marcello.

One day at a rehearsal, I met the Major-domo of the claue. He had been lying in wait for me. He pointed out, and with some truth, that the second act of *La Bohème* is largely Musetta's. But, she must make the most of the well-known Waltz song. And an irate conductor can easily kill her important moment for applause. A conductor at best is only human and if he is suffering from dyspepsia or unrequited love, he may sublimate his maladjustment to the detriment of the singer. I had seen this happen and in any case I wanted to play safe, so I engaged the claue to carry me through safely.

I suppose that if I had come across with a few hundred dollars, they would have staged a riot or a stampede. They played fair with me, and at the proper instant their applause and bravos were taken up by the audience.

The claue members are standees; they know their scores and are placed at points of vantage throughout the house. I believe they are a European tradition and important artists pay well for their

co-operation. A friend of mine, singing her first big role, was guaranteed a certain number of curtain calls for a flat sum and extra calls pro rata. It's a great game. My observations naturally cover my own period of work at the Opera House. Of the present claqué activities I know nothing.

When I joined the Metropolitan Opera Company, a young American named Paul Althouse was one of our leading tenors. We became good friends and I shall always be indebted to him for his well-timed advice, and for later placing me with his own concert managers, Haensel and Jones.

One day at rehearsal Paul said to me, "I have been watching you and you seem to be a nice clean American girl. If you want to stay with the Company, I offer you some advice."

"Mind your own business. Stay away from the boss (meaning Gatti). Learn every role in your contract, especially the ones you never expect to sing. Your value this first season is as an understudy and if you fail in an emergency, your goose is cooked!"

Every spare minute found me at the piano, memorizing roles in which I never expected to appear. And, of course, true to Paul's warning, the call came at the end of the season.

At nine o'clock one Sunday night I was summoned to the Opera House and found our Italian repetiteur waiting for me. Did I know the music of Nella, in *Gianni Schicchi*, he asked. The three one-act operas of Puccini were being given Monday night. Farrar was singing the *Suor Angelica* and the house was sold out.

The late Claudia Muzio was appearing in *Il Tabarro* and Florence Easton sang the lead in *Gianni Schicchi*. But the second artist in the last named opera was indisposed and I was her only understudy. I assured the conductor that I knew my music, but he took me through the role and happily he was able to report to Mr. Gatti that I was note perfect.

*Gianni Schicchi* was a comedy of the clownish slap-stick variety and there had been about twenty rehearsals for the complicated stage business. Our Italian conductor, Roberto Moranzoni, was for changing the bill on Monday night. He said that it would be impossible for me to play the role, even if I was musically certain of it. But Gatti insisted that I would get through and he called a stage rehearsal for ten-thirty on Monday morning.

To the piano accompaniment, I played the role, pushed, pulled and dragged by the stage director. The other artists were convulsed with laughter at my frantic efforts to be in the right place at the right time.

The evening performance found me in an ill-fitting and grotesque costume, which added only to my nervous tension. But I had complete co-operation from my fellow-artists and with one eye on Moranzoni, one ear for the orchestra, I managed to grasp the quick stage whispers, as we played—"Sit down, stand up, walk to the right, open the window, jump on the chest, grab the bed clothes,"—these were but few of the dozens of intimate directions which were passed to me.

I got through without any upset to the comedy and I feel that if the Marx Brothers had seen me, I would have been asked to appear in their next production. But the whole appearance gave me confidence and I later heard that my stocks had gone up; the management was pleased that I was reliable in an emergency.

I thanked Althouse for his timely counsel and he smilingly said, "I told you so."

Paul, his beautiful wife, Jay and myself, made a happy foursome and many a little sphagetti rendez-vous knew us for good patrons.

In my second season at the Opera I confided to Paul Althouse that I was very anxious to step into concert work. And Paul in all kindness introduced me to Mr. Haensel, of that highly reputable

firm of Haensel and Jones. Mr. Haensel allowed that he would like to be my manager, but I must give a song recital in New York City. This was the logical way to break into the concert field. And in an unwise moment I agreed to prepare a program for the following fall. Mr. Haensel engaged a date in Aeolian Hall for November, 1920.

In fairness to Mme. von Ende, I was still working with her, this good teacher decried the recital idea and suggested that I wait another season. It was ignorance of my artistic growth, not conceit, which led me on to a dreadful awakening. For I proceeded to prepare a concert program worthy of the talents of Flagstad, and I had but little time for the preparation.

The eventful evening came and Aeolian Hall was filled to capacity. The audience was a brilliant one, with a good sprinkling of my Metropolitan confrères. My accompanist was one of the most distinguished in his field, Conrad V. Bos. There were flowers in abundance, in fact, everything was tops, except the singer of the evening!

The morning papers, and I had already sensed it, brought me news along these lines. The voice was lovely, but I would do well to pass up the difficult Mozart numbers until I had acquired further technique. As for my German lieder, I was simply naïve in attempting them. For while the notes were correctly intoned, I didn't seem to know the content of the deeply moving words! I guess that, like Hamlet, I was saying words, words, words!

I was crushed, thought the critics were merciless and was ashamed to face my friends and my manager. But people can be awfully kind at times, and that is how it was in my case. Even Mr. Haensel was encouraging and reminded me that if every young singer stopped because of adverse criticisms, there would be few artists now before the public.

Mr. Haensel would continue to book me in concert, and I in turn

would confine my songs to those whose emotional content lay within my interpretative ability.

In retrospect I later saw that the critics were not unjust. At that time the brew within my cup of life was rather saccharine in flavor. I had made little acquaintance with disappointment, disillusionment and sorrow, my Gethsemane was several years ahead of me. I had dealt only with surface emotions, my imagination was limited and my horizon still too narrow. I had never traveled and the deep fires of passion had not yet touched me. My love for Jay was beautiful to the uttermost and ran on like the waters of a dear old lazy stream—a stream which had never known turbulence, but which flowed serenely over its rock-bed of affection and respect.

And my insight into the passionate song literature of Brahms and Strauss was about as effective as a child's reading of Shakespeare. If I could sing that recital today, there would be no dearth of emotion, color or nuance in my work, for life has filled my paint box. But now I have no brush with which to work. My voice has long since been out of commission, in fact, it has gone with the wind! And the sounds which now emanate from my nicotine throat are comparable only to the raucous vibrations of my neighboring frogs. They live in a pond near-by, and their nightly serenade warns me that music is for nightingales and croaking is left for frogs and old voices.

The disastrous New York recital was now behind me. It was time for the renewal of my third year contract with the Opera and I had occasion to talk with Mr. Gatti-Casazza. We spoke in French, Mr. Gatti remarking with regret that I did not speak the Italian language fluently. And with praise for my high notes, he said that the voice was cold and needed warming up.

Now, Mr. Gatti knew very well that I was happily married, for a standing joke among the artists was to the effect that Mellish was married for ten years and still in love with her own husband.

But with his irresistible humor he made this suggestion. "Why don't you take an Italian lover, your voice will be warmer and you will speak Italian beautifully!" I blushed, like a school-girl, and declined his well-meant advice. I told Mr. Gatti that I was at that moment making a change in vocal teachers. I was entering the studio of Percy Rector Stevens, the capable teacher of Paul Althouse. With a shrug of his shoulders, and a pinch on my cheek, Mr. Gatti dismissed me saying, "Va Bene."

I was in the Stevens studio for two seasons and my time there was interesting and productive. And dear old "Stevie," as we fondly called him, had one time of it with me. We worked a lot on interpretation and "Stevie" screamed, ranted and cursed at the lack of warmth and passion in my singing.

In the "*Depuis le jour*," some exquisite lines run like this—"Et je tremble, délicieusement au souvenir charmant de ton premier baiser." "And I tremble deliciously at the charming remembrance of our first kiss."

Stevie declared that my singing of these lines expressed the sentiment conveyed when one casually says, "Ah, go to Hell!"

Now, I ask you, do you think we worked to give those lines the glowing passionate warmth with which Mary Garden had always imbued them?

"For Christ's sake," said Stevie, "haven't you ever been kissed like that, or can't you remember?"

Well, I allowed that Jay's first kisses were adorable, but that was so many years ago. And his present kisses were still sweet beyond words. But to feel them as red hot coals upon my lips and to sing of the devastating upheavals which follow such kisses was simply beyond my dull imagination.

"Well," said Stevie, "I see that your kissing experience has been mostly academic. Some day a high-gear'd lover will cross your path and you will get a kiss that you couldn't forget, even if you wanted to; remember what I'm telling you!"

I treated these remarks with superior scorn, such a thing was simply unthinkable. I loved my husband. Was not that the answer to everything? I was prim, inhibited and circumspect. Surely these things counted as assets against temptation and made me an untouchable in so far as an "affair" was concerned. But "Stevie's" prophecy came true within three short years when in a romantic setting, far from Jay and Home Sweet Home, I found myself allergic to another's kiss!

Prior to 1924 my contracts with the Metropolitan Opera had been for the entire season. I made short concert tours before and after the season with but few concerts during the season, these always by written permission from Mr. Gatti.

Haensel and Jones were anxious to book me more extensively and with a seasonal contract at the Opera, this would not be possible. Mr. Haensel wisely advised that for 1924 I ask Mr. Gatti for a performance contract, which would still keep my Metropolitan connection and give me available time for concert work.

Mr. Gatti gave me a contract for ten performances for the latter half of the season and during the first half of the year I concertized.

These concerts took me to the principal cities of Canada, the West and the Southwest of the United States. One tour began in Denver, Colorado. I saw a snowfall in September in Las Vegas, New Mexico; cowboys in Cheyenne; a blizzard in Wyoming; a gushing oil-well in Greeley, Colorado; zinc mines in Pittsburg, Kansas, and orange groves in Phoenix, Arizona. The tours were always interesting but at times I rebelled against the gypsy life, and pitied the traveling salesman. I hated the train travel, with train connections at ungodly hours in the morning.

The concerts were always given in fine high school or university auditoriums. But the hotels of the town were often second or third rate. I usually ate my meals in a sparsely furnished bedroom and felt like a monk in his cell. I dreaded the stuffy dining rooms with

the well-acquainted patrons staring at the newcomer. I often took sponge baths, in preference to a bath in a questionable bathtub whose tenacious marks gave evidence of a previous occupant. That was the seamy side, but there was always the joy of singing to enthusiastic music lovers, whose quick response to good music transcended any inconvenience. I made some lasting friends on these trips and visited charming homes. Then there was always the blessed manna of my concert check.

These concert fees, together with my modest salary at the Opera House, had accumulated and my checking account, now in four figures, gave me a feeling of affluence.

During the season of 1918-1919 the drive was still on for Liberty Bonds and Mr. Gatti-Casazza was called upon many times, and asked to send one of his artists who would appear at an appointed place and sing the Star Spangled Banner. For some reason I was delegated to take over many of these appearances and they stand out very much in my memory and for different reasons.

I was sent to a theater in the West 40's where a well known actress was starring in a production, the name of which I have now forgotten. I suppose, as an act of courtesy, the stage manager took me to her door when the curtain had descended upon the first act.

"Miss B," he said, "this is Miss Mellish and she is singing here tonight."

"What do you mean, singing here in my show, and who are you?" she said, glaring at me.

"There is no occasion for worry, Miss B, I am just Mary Mellish of the Metropolitan Opera Company. There is a little drive on here for Liberty Bonds and I am one of the artists on the fifteen minute program. I am singing the Star Spangled Banner."

Miss B measured me from head to foot, turned on her heel and slammed her dressing room door in my face.

I know that she was and is a patriotic American but I had the

impression that she feared I was stealing her show and she left with me an ugly thought as to the jealousy in the theater.

In contrast to this unhappy incident, I later went down to Port Washington, Long Island, where another Liberty Loan Drive was in progress. The speaker of the evening was the beloved and late ex-President Theodore Roosevelt. I have always been identified with hero worship and he was at the top list of my Gods.

Jay drove me to Port Washington and the auditorium was crowded to the doors with standees at every available point. At the proper time in the program, I was introduced and sang the Star Spangled Banner. Then I took my place in the auditorium and sat in admiration while this dynamic personality drove home the content of his speech.

After the evening's activities, I lingered on a bit hoping that someone might present me to Theodore Roosevelt. As I was about ready to leave, I saw this great man walking toward me. His hand was extended and he was wearing his unforgettable smile. Baring those strong white teeth which seemed to be such a part of him, he said,

"I was afraid you might get away, Miss Mellish, and I wanted to meet you. Thank you for being such a help on our program."

He shook my hand and I thrilled with delight at this personal contact.

On the third occasion of my patriotic contributions, if you could call it that, I was sent to the Winter Garden on Broadway, where a brilliant review was being given. This review was under the management of the Shuberts.

When the curtain descended upon the first act, our master of ceremonies gave his little talk in which he urged the people to give and give until it hurt. I was introduced and sang the Star Spangled Banner. I wore my smartest evening gown which fitted me like the scales on a snake's body, these same scales being iridescent beads

of sapphire blue and white. The flood-lights of the theater were turned on me and the audience as usual arose in a body and sang.

Jay as always, was waiting for me behind the stage, and as we were about to leave, an usher touched me on the arm.

"Miss Mellish, J. J. Shubert is in the back of the theater and wants to see you."

We walked to the lobby and Mr. Shubert extended his hand, congratulating me upon my delivery of the National Anthem. He was not given to graciousness, as is often the way with managers. Graciousness often makes a manager soft and after all he has to pay salaries and he cannot afford to drop his mask. Compliments find repercussions in a demand for higher wages!

"You are singing very well these days, and I see that you have kept your figure. How long do you expect to stick around that damned Opera House and sing small parts? Why don't you come to me before it's too late? You can still be a prima donna on Broadway, but if you stay at the Metropolitan long enough you are going to find yourself in the discard."

"Thank you, Mr. Shubert," I said, "I appreciate your kind offer but I love my work and every minute I stay there I am happier in my chosen field."

And with a polite good night we parted.

This was the second time Mr. Shubert had beckoned me to Broadway.

I had a short concert tour where I appeared at Windsor, Toronto, Montreal and then went on to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. My manager, Mr. Haensel, telephoned me about half an hour before my departure and said,

"Mary, I forgot to tell you this is the first time you are singing in Canada and it is the custom that after the artist finishes her program and encores, she sings one verse of 'God, Save the King.'

The audience usually joins with her. It is just a custom of the country."

"Well," I said, "that will be very simple. I certainly know one verse of 'God, Save the King.'"

On this trip, I took a charming, talented accompanist, a Texas girl named Ola Gulledge. The first concert was in Windsor, Canada, and Ola and I had carefully rehearsed the first verses of "God, Save the King." The concert was in a beautiful auditorium and it was packed to the doors. After my encore numbers, the audience rose and I sang one verse of "God, Save the King." As the last note of the first verse died away, and I was about to leave, to my complete consternation the audience started the second verse! It was awful. Resourceful, as I usually was, I gave a smiling glance to my accompanist and facing my audience, I opened my mouth and making it as large as a haddock, I sang the notes of "God, Save the King," and the words I sang do, re, mi, fa, so, la, si, do.

Coming back to the hotel I said to Ola,

"Well, we got away with it, but I can't take any more chances." So when we arrived in Toronto, we went to a music store and bought a cheap little copy of familiar songs. We found there the second verse of "God, Save the King." I memorized it carefully, but at the concerts in Toronto and Montreal they stopped singing after the first verse and walked out.

In Montreal I stayed at the Hotel Mt. Royal. I had a lovely room done in colorful chintzes. The evening was dreamy and beautiful. From the roof garden, I could hear the strains of the most wonderful dance music that had ever come to my ears, and I said again to myself for the hundredth time,

"Why are you seeking to be a priestess of music in far away places, when you know that you would rather be dancing with Jay in New York, than any place else in this world." But I just had to sing!

Our next town was Pittsburgh. It was my usual practice in concert tours to go the theater and see that my piano was there and had been properly tuned. But on this one occasion I was tired and lazy and took a chance. The concert was scheduled for 8:15 and Miss Gullidge and I arrived back stage at about 7:30. I was wearing a rather stunning evening coat which I must mention, because with that coat as a stage prop, I gave my first and only show of so-called artistic temperament. The coat was made of American beauty red velvet with a handsome white fox collar.

The concert was under the auspices of the Daughters of the American Revolution and was held in a theater in Pittsburgh. Back-stage there were two or three frumpy ladies of questionable years, members of the concert committee. I introduced myself and they shyly welcomed me. The curtain was down and I sauntered out on the stage to see if the piano was properly placed—and there was none! It is easy to talk of it now, but I cannot tell you what happened to me when I saw that empty stage. I was billed as a Metropolitan artist and the audience was expecting a concert with dignified “props” to say the least.

“Where is the piano?” I asked. One of the ladies said, “It is down in the pit.” At first, I could not sense her words. I said, “What do you mean, that I am to stand on this stage and my accompanist is to sit in the orchestra pit and play for me?” “Yes,” she said, “that is the arrangement.” “Well,” I said, “somebody is at fault and someone here who is in charge must have a copy of my contract which distinctly calls for a grand piano on the stage.” “Well,” said one of the ladies beginning to whimper, “I thought there would be trouble. Mrs. So and So had charge of this part of the entertainment and she left for Palm Beach. I haven’t had anything to do with it, mine was the publicity end, and this lady standing next to me has charge of the ticket sales. Mrs. So and So should have done something about the piano, before she left for Palm Beach.”

The situation seemed hopeless and I retired to a corner to talk it over with Miss Gullidge. "Now, Ola," I said, "I am going to threaten these women to the effect that I am leaving here now, and taking the sleeper for New York. Of course, I have no intention of leaving. But as long as I brought myself and you into this God awful mess, I am going to collect my concert fee, if I have to sing with an accordion!"

And drawing my sumptuous coat about me with all the airs of a prima donna, I said to the frightened little lady of the D. A. R. "Madam, I am an artist of the Metropolitan Opera Company. I have sung in concerts in important cities in the United States, but I have never before been so humiliated. My accompanist and I are leaving now and we are taking the sleeper for New York City."

Whereupon the whimpering gave way to real tears.

"Oh, you can't do that, Miss Mellish. I beg of you not to. The house is half full now and we have been looking forward to this concert for weeks and weeks. You just can't do that."

"Oh, can't I?" I said. "You just watch me go." And I started to leave, slowly, of course, because I had no intention of doing anything but collecting my check. The woman caught hold of my coat and said,

"Can't we do something about it?"

I said, "Obviously it is too late for you to transport a grand piano to this stage, but I shall compromise with you. If you will get some men to take that upright piano out of the orchestra pit and place it upon the stage, I shall sing the concert."

More panic ensued, more chattering among the women, each one blaming the other to the point where I thought there was going to be some hair-pulling. I stood aside calmly and watched them.

The audience was now coming in, in goodly numbers, and I could hear the friendly chatter outside. Meanwhile the women on the committee showed signs of activity. One of them dashed to the

telephone and told me that arrangements had been made to move the piano. After another wait of about twenty minutes, four husky negroes appeared. They took off their coats, went down into the orchestra pit and in less time than it takes to tell it, they lifted the timeworn upright piano on to the stage. One of the committee women, as a placating gesture, dashed out and placed beside the piano an artificial palm. I turned to Miss Gulledge and said, "Let's begin."

I apologized to my audience for having kept them waiting, laid no blame upon the committee, but it was very obvious that the fault was not mine. It happened that my first number was a little Mozart song and there was an introduction of about eight bars on the piano. When Miss Gulledge ran her hands over the keys, raucous sounds came forth and they sounded like nothing I had ever heard before.

Miss Gulledge and I exchanged glances, in which there was complete understanding and I began my concert. Realizing that I would have little help from the piano, I put more than the usual effort into my program. I came away from Pittsburgh with fine notices of my concert appearance.

There was another occasion on which Mr. Haensel sent a quartet of singers to Washington, D. C. I was the soprano, and my friend the eminent tenor, Paul Althouse, was also in the quartet. The concert was to be given at high noon and it was on the occasion of the opening of a very smart hotel.

At about eleven o'clock in the morning my telephone rang and Paul called me from his hotel.

"Mary," he said, "I have very bad news for you. There may be no concert."

"How come?" I said. "What is the matter?"

"Well, I found out last night that the manager under whom these concerts are being given is a crook!"

That is the way Paul always talked, hitting straight from the shoulder.

"What do you mean by a crook? How can that affect us?"

"Well, it's a well-known fact," said Paul, "that this man recently gave a check to a prominent artist [and he mentioned her name]. The check bounced back. I have been in telephone communication with Mr. Haensel, and he says we are not to sing unless we get cash or a certified check. I doubt that we will get either, so have your bag all packed and take it down to the concert hall. We can get a one o'clock train for New York."

This was all new to me, but I did what I was told and donning concert costume, I took my daytime clothes in my bag, checked out of the hotel, then took a taxi to the concert hall. Paul was parading up and down and talking to me and the other two members of the quartet, and he warned us,

"No money, no concert."

Through an open door, I could see the assembled audience smartly dressed and on the qui vive for the very lovely Verdi-Puccini program which we were to give.

"Oh, Paul," I said, "we can't do that! As long as we are here and these people have turned out to hear us, I think we should sing. I hate to disappoint an audience and let us chance the money."

"No, no," said Paul, "you are new in the concert field. I have been in it for years. I have a wife and two children to support and I don't propose to go around singing for managers who will not pay my fee. No tickee, no shirtee!"

The concert manager appeared. Paul walked up to him and in a blustering manner, said,

"We want certified checks or cash."

I thought it was the crudest thing I had ever heard, but I know that Paul was justified. I regretted that life was so mixed up with money.

The manager very quietly took out four large envelopes from his pocket. The envelopes were filled and on each one was the name of an artist in the quartet. Paul took the envelopes and passed them to us and as he did so, he said,

"Count that money and see that every dollar is correct." (Oh, my artistic soul!)

As I counted, I thought of all the dear people sitting in that auditorium who were waiting to feast their ears on the lovely melodies of Verdi and Puccini. How little they knew that the money changers were in the temple!

The fees were correct and we graciously appeared before our waiting audience. The newspaper criticisms, among other complimentary things, said Mr. Althouse and Miss Mellish were in *most* sympathetic mood and sang beautifully!

## X

### THE SCOTTI OPERA COMPANY

IN 1921, my third season with the company, I heard marvelous tales of the Scotti Opera Company. Antonio Scotti had organized his own Opera Company with Metropolitan principals, chorus, orchestra, scenery and a few young artists who had Metropolitan possibilities. The venture had been a great artistic success and Scotti had been enriched by several thousand dollars.

The itinerary had been mostly on the West Coast and it was now rumored that Scotti was organizing again, this tour to include many more towns. Geraldine Farrar was to meet the Company for some special performances. I dreamed of going with them. I wanted experience in new roles, particularly the Musetta in *La Bohème*, and I craved travel. I had never been west of the Mississippi.

With Scotti, I had only a bowing acquaintance and how was I to approach the situation and not make a blunder? In a moment of inspiration, I wrote a letter to Miss Farrar in which I expressed my wishes to join the Company and asked that she mention my name to Scotti. About three days later I had a telephone call from Mr. Scotti. "Miss Farrar tell me that you like to come with my Company."

"Yes, Mr. Scotti, I am very anxious to sing the Musetta and I would like the trip."

"Miss Farrar say she like to have you go, you are a good routine artist and Miss Farrar no like to have too many beginners when she work. If you come with me, you have to double and sing many

small parts. I no want to take too many artists. But I pay you a good salary. Do you know the role of Natalia in *Zaza*?"

And with no hesitancy, I boldly lied and answered, "Yes."

I had never seen the score of *Zaza*, nor a performance, but I had seen part of the dress rehearsal.

"Good," said Scotti, "meet me tomorrow afternoon at four o'clock at Miss Farrar's house on West 74th Street."

The time was May and the Metropolitan Opera House was closed for the season. I was in fear and trembling. Suppose tomorrow afternoon they decided to run through the score, what a dilemma for me, and how embarrassing, especially when Miss Farrar had recommended me!

There was no time to be lost and canceling a theater matinee, I dashed to the Opera House and obtained the score of *Zaza*. The late Salvatore Fucito was my opera coach at the time and I telephoned him for an appointment. His day was full, but he would see me the next morning. And nothing daunted, I went directly to his studio, intending to coax from him a few minutes in which he could at least work out my role. I played in luck, for sitting in the ante-room, was one of our leading tenors, the late Giulio Crimi, who sang the tenor lead in *Zaza*. And now meeting him in Fucito's studio, he was all smiles and very gallantly offered me half of his coaching hour. While we were waiting, he marked out the role and showed me the cuts.

That night I worked at my own piano, and with another hour at Fucito's I felt more comfortable. I had not memorized the part, but at least I knew the answers and would not be found napping.

Arriving at Miss Farrar's the next afternoon I walked in upon a lovely picture. Scotti, or Toto as we fondly called him, was the ever dashing Beau Brummel. Geraldine wore a fascinating hostess gown and in the charming setting of her own drawing room, these two great artists were discussing opera problems.

Miss Farrar was telling Scotti and in no uncertain terms, that for her guest performance in *Carmen*, there would be *no horses* in the last act. Scotti put up some weak arguments as to the effectiveness of an entrance with horses.

Miss Farrar remained obdurate, and shaking her finger at him reminded him of these facts—The elegant span of horses used for our New York productions are one thing. They are well trained and handled carefully by experienced stablemen. But even on that immense stage, they have often been known to plunge and balk and act all out of reason. Many times the chorus people have had to scamper away from their menacing hoofs.

In small towns, we might draw truck-horses or bucking bronchos who would decide to leap over the footlights. There could be no such chances. Miss Farrar and Escamillo would enter in the carriage, but the same would be drawn in by the picadors. And so that problem was settled.

And I am here reminded that the horses used in our Metropolitan *Carmen* productions were given to another unpleasant prank. Being nervous animals, they evidently re-acted to the lights and music and on several occasions, as they neared the footlights, one or both of them would toss their visiting cards upon the stage!

*Carmen* would quickly turn and warn us to move aside lest we, unwarned, should step into the steaming and offending deposits.

Then *Zaza* was discussed and was I relieved when Miss Farrar said, "You are always sure of your music, Mary, so I give no thought to that. But Natalia is not easy to play, and there will be no time for a rehearsal. I am rather fussy about the part, for Natalia is constantly with me for two acts, and there is considerable detail in the stage business. If you will come to me next week, before I leave for Europe, we will go through the *mise-en-scène* and I will give you some special cues and markings."

Two days later I signed my contract with the Scotti Opera Company, and having memorized the role, I reported to Miss Farrar for further instructions. This intimate rehearsal took place in Miss Farrar's studio. It was an inspiring room, replete with the personality of America's singing idol.

Miss Farrar drew the scenes and entrances on some yellow paper. I kept it for years. And her playing of the piano amazed me beyond words. For this artist read the difficult score as easily as I read the daily papers.

We parted, to meet in September in San Francisco, Miss Farrar, as is her gracious way, thanking me for my cooperation.

In September, 1921, the Scotti Opera Company left the Pennsylvania Station on a special train and our first performance was to be in Seattle, Washington. The station was thronged with relatives and friends, excitement ran high and I was torn between the new joy of travel and the sorrow of parting with Jay. It was our first separation and Jay had unselfishly insisted that I take advantage of the tour.

The artists traveled in compartment cars and my compartment was shared by a young singer named Myrtle Schaaf. Miss Schaaf had been engaged for the coming Metropolitan season and was getting her first opera experience with Scotti's Company. She was a beautiful girl, with an amiable disposition, a lovely voice and had quickly ingratiated herself with the older artists.

We carried a small piano in one of the drawing rooms, and rehearsals were held en route. These rehearsals were rather perfunctory, and sketchy in character. Our conductors were also in holiday mood and we feared no check-up from Scotti. He never arose before noon, and when he stepped from his drawing room an hour later he was groomed down to the ground and a perfect picture of what is worn by the well dressed man.

Our route lay by way of the Canadian Rockies, which at that

time meant nothing to me. My notion of Canada was vague, just a remnant of my early geography lessons. I saw it as a big empty space which rested on the top of the United States, at least that is how the map had looked.

So my travel delights began on the first morning of that tour. And every day and night brought new wonders and beautiful vistas. I seem to remember above other spots the wide stretches of the Calgary plains, the interesting Saskatchewan River, the dear little station at Banff, with snow-capped mountains in the distance and the great busy harbor at Vancouver.

In those days the road beds were not perfected and the streamlined trains were yet a dream. Our lengthy entourage was pushed and pulled up steep mountain sides. We jogged in and out among foreboding cliffs, beautiful in their unusual coloring, but sinister nevertheless. They seemed to resent our noisy invasion of their silent domain and danger was written on their ragged peaks. Then after a space of easy travel, the train would plunge and race down another mountain pass bringing us into glorious pine forests. The world was green again and at night the waters of happy streams and roaring cascades played in the silver moonlight.

Here was beauty in the grand manner and on a colossal scale. When Nature set out these scenes she was lavish in the extreme. Only in Switzerland did she duplicate these sets, and I had not been to Switzerland at this time. To the traveler who seeks a scenic thrill, I suggest the Canadian Rockies.

We arrived in Seattle with no mishap, to find a lively growing city, with important shops, smart clothes and no cowboys—I thought that cowboys were running wild in most towns west of the Mississippi! The week in Seattle was a success; we had crowded houses and splendid notices. On the second morning of our stay there, I was walking to the theater for a morning rehearsal. Two women approached me and one of them said,

"Are you Miss Seattle?"

"No," I replied, "Is this some joke?"

"Really," said the woman, "You must tell us if you are Miss Seattle."

"I don't know what this is all about, but I am Miss Mellish and I am here with the Scotti Opera Company."

Then the woman apologized and explained in this manner.

A leading Seattle newspaper was running a contest that week. Every day some young woman representing Miss Seattle, would walk on the main streets of the town. If you were to accost her and she admitted that she was Miss Seattle, you could report to the newspaper office and receive two free matinee tickets. And you had to be the first one to discover her, as there were only two free tickets for each day. These two women had combed the streets on the previous day and vowed to find Miss Seattle before the week had passed.

I told my story at the theater and our publicity man insisted that it was good material. The next day's paper carried a large picture of your humble servant, together with a drawn out yarn about the Miss Seattle incident. And so a small artist became publicized. This same story was later used by my concert managers, for of such scraps of news are headlines made!

We then came to the thrilling city of San Francisco and Mr. Scotti had gotten special rates for the entire company at the then beautiful Hotel Fairmont. Miss Farrar stayed at the St. Francis Hotel.

We gave our performances in a vast old barn, so it seemed. It was called the San Francisco Auditorium.

We had some fair sized audiences and some very small ones, but when Farrar appeared we hung out the signs "Standing Room Only." And this was upon every occasion when she sang. She was a powerful box-office attraction.

Scotti, for all his charm, was parsimonious to a degree and a poor business man. Miss Farrar had offered to sing her performances for a flat fee. But Scotti was terrified at the amount and cried poverty, the company would not stand such salaries. Whereupon Miss Farrar suggested a smaller fee and a percentage of the box-office receipts. Scotti accepted the latter proposition and did he squirm and howl when Miss Farrar took a big cache, far in excess of her original fee.

"I take Farrar to make money for my company and she rob me," was his frequent comment.

Myrtle Schaaf and I shared a beautiful room at the Fairmont. We awoke one morning to find our bodies punctuated with itchy spots. Most of the spots were in places inconvenient for public scratching and we were thoroughly miserable. We had been eating plenty of California's delicious fruit and I diagnosed our case as super-acidity.

We went to a drug store and asked for medicine to reduce the acid. Myrtle had a spot on her arm which could be shown, and the druggist looking at it carefully, said,

"Are you girls from the East?"

"Yes, we are from New York."

"Well, I am sorry to inform you, but you have fleas!"

With righteous indignation I demanded to know if he and other San Francisco folks had fleas.

"Oh, no," he said, laughingly, "they never bother us, they only like Easterners and lie in wait for them. There is nothing to do about it; when you leave San Francisco the fleas will hop away and wait for fresh meat from the East."

With this humiliating verdict, we hurried back to our hotel, discarded every piece of our wearing apparel and tied the garments in a laundry bag. After a hot bath and fresh clothes, we sauntered forth to find the fleas still traveling with us. They remained our

close companions during the stay in San Francisco. We later learned that the habitat of this flea can be in carpets, mattresses or upholstery. In any case, they had fine pickings on us.

We moved on to Los Angeles and in this City I was to do my Natalia to Farrar's incomparable *Zaza*. On the night of the performance Miss Farrar sent a message, asking me to come to her dressing room. After a few hurried suggestions she said,

"Now, Mary, the audience is filled with Hollywood folks, my moving picture friends. They have heard me in concert, but never in opera. Tonight I am going to give them a real show. I have every confidence in you, so stand by."

To learn a role to the simple piano score, is one thing. But to hear the orchestration of the score for the first time and with sixty or eighty instruments in full play, is a disconcerting experience. Only the well-trained ear can hope to cope with it.

The violins, cellos, flutes or brasses may carry your entrance note. And at times, the singer must pick her note out of the silence which follows the last thundering chord. Experience naturally facilitates this ordeal. But to the young artist, a performance without orchestra rehearsal always carries qualms and nerves a-plenty.

The first act went beautifully with Alice Gentle giving a corking performance of *Zaza's* tipsy mother.

And I don't know yet how I ever got through the next act. I was frightened out of my wits. Miss Farrar and I were alone on the stage and I had never played a close-up in a tragedy scene. When Farrar unleashed her emotions and cried real tears, I cried with her. I felt her intensity like a burning flame. She grabbed my wrist and squeezed it, until I was sure she had broken some bones. And what with listening to the orchestration, watching Papi for my singing cues, and trying to play the scene creditably, I was truly distracted. This was acting such as I had never seen, and when the curtain descended the house broke into wild applause. I cannot

recall the number of curtain calls for Zaza, but they seemed endless. I have heard Miss Farrar in many of her dynamic moments, but that *Zaza* performance in Los Angeles remains outstanding.

In that Scotti tour we played sixteen cities, our closing performance being in Baltimore. We arrived in New York November first, in time for Metropolitan Opera rehearsals.

There had been an unwritten law while we were on tour, to the effect that upon reaching each town, an Italian chorus man would immediately go in search of the best spaghetti eating place. He would inform the owner of the restaurant that the great Scotti would dine there after the performance. And the good padrone and his wife nearly went to pieces, with the knowledge that Signor Scotti and his artists would grace their humble menage.

These places were often holes in the wall, with no claim to distinction, other than first class spaghetti.

Scotti's guests were never more than eight in number and included Myrtle and me.

After a performance we would crowd into two cabs and cruise to unknown parts of the City. We went into dark streets and winding alleys, and once the rendez-vous was in a cellar, with Scotti muttering curses on the chorus scout who had sent us there. But the places were clean, the owners outdid themselves and the food was at all times excellent.

And in these little hide-aways Baron Scarpia, Floria Tosca and other glamorous operatic characters became chattering gourmands. It seems to me that the yards of spaghetti we consumed would have measured the circumference of the globe. I am still addicted to this Italian mainstay!

Scotti was terribly nearsighted and equally vain. He refused to wear eye-glasses and when the bill was presented to him he would pass it to me saying,

"Marietta, you make the addition. In these places they know I Scotti and they always thief me." (Meaning rob me.)

But these were happy troupng times as we sat with light hearts and full bellies listening to anecdotes and episodes of the opera world.

Scotti lost money on this trip, but undaunted he planned a Southern tour for the following Spring, and I was re-engaged as a member of his company.

#### THE SOUTHERN TOUR

April 22, 1922, was an unforgettable day at the Metropolitan Opera House. Geraldine Farrar was giving her farewell performance, a matinee of *Zaza*.

Musical New York was all agog and if there was one place in this world where I wanted to be, it was at that performance. But this was not the order of things, for at the very hour that the curtain was rising I was en route to St. Louis. I was to join the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra and appear with them for two concerts under the baton of the charming and talented Rudolph Ganz.

I tried to read on the train but the printed matter seemed to say—"Isn't this awful, that I should be sitting here and not there! I wish I could see that Opera House today. I wonder how she (Farrar) will get through this finale. Of course the crowd will be simply hysterical, there will be joy and tears and bravos, mingled with the emotion of parting with their opera idol."

My own heart was very full. I had been engaged for the following season and I just didn't want to think of the Metropolitan with Caruso and Farrar no longer in the picture.

At the close of the Southern tour I wrote a note to Miss Farrar. I expressed keen regret at being absent from her farewell performance and mentioned also that I had heard she had given some personal souvenirs to her fellow artists.

My reply to this letter came the next day, when Miss Farrar's

chauffeur delivered a small box to my home. The box contained a beautiful pair of coral earrings worn by Farrar when she sang *Carmen*.

Was I happy? No, I was just delirious! I have never worn the earrings, I was always afraid of losing them. And like most things we save, it is now too late to flaunt them.

The dashing red hoops swaying under my mixed grey hair would be about as appropriate as a nun's habit on Mae West.

After my concerts I entrained again, this time for Birmingham, Alabama, where I was to join the Scotti Opera Company for the Southern tour. Myrtle Schaaf was again to be my traveling companion and was waiting for me at the hotel in Birmingham. She had saved the New York newspapers and I read the glowing accounts of the Farrar farewell.

We opened in a town in the South, with a performance of *Tosca*, Scotti doing his matchless Baron Scarpia. I have lost the itinerary of that tour, but I know that we also gave a *Carmen* and a *Bohème* performance while in that City.

I am not likely to forget that *Carmen* performance, for when the curtain descended Scotti introduced me to a wealthy opera fan who had fallen for my charms!

At last romance had caught up with me and the gentleman in question began a campaign, fast, furious and extravagant. There were no more cheap spaghetti suppers, we were entertained at the gentleman's home, palatial in its appointments. The gay old buzzard followed our company from city to city, to the huge amusement of all, and I stood for many taunts from Myrtle and Scotti although they never refused the midnight feasts!

And that brings to mind that a charming prima donna, when in gay mood, sings a ribald cockney song, as only she can. The story tells of a simple country maiden who was ruined by the village

Squire. The poor girl went to London to hide her shame. She became a successful prostitute, but the parents always felt the disgrace and remained bitter. In referring to the parents, the lines of the song say,

"They drinks the port wine what she sends them,  
But they never can forgive!"

I paid for our gourmet's feast in smiles only and Scotti's entire company can testify to that. Many nights when we sat down to vintage champagne and humming bird's eyelashes au gratin, I would gladly have exchanged the menu for the spaghetti bolognese, d'autrefois.

Many times did I tell my cavalier that the chase was hopeless. I loved my husband and was counting the days until I returned to him. But persistent wooer that he was, my Casanova kept up the chase for about three weeks.

In phrases well chosen and of exquisite delicacy he told me of a famous actress to whom he had given a string of pearls. And an equally famous dancer had received her first diamond bracelet from a crony friend of his. For me, only an emerald would be his gift, no other jewel was fit to grace my lovely person! A grand line that is. I haven't heard anything like it since, neither do I own an emerald. And if I had had an emerald, I should have sold it last Spring. The stock market was at rock-bottom and I budgeted to the last farthing. Ready cash would have meant a new coat of paint for my house, some cases of Scotch whiskey for my depleted wine cellar and several loads of manure for garden stimulation. The delicate rose and succulent asparagus are no different from the human being in this respect, that they too need a little lift at times. City slickers may not be well-informed as to the cost of rural commodities, but I am telling you that good manure is strangely expensive.

When my emerald promising gallant would appear on our trail, our conductors would slowly hum a few notes from *Parsifal* (meaning the fool).

But he was no fool, he belonged to an era when all women in the theater were supposedly of easy virtue and could be had. I have lived to see that idea exploded. And today I believe that there is more easy virtue pro rata among sheltered housewives than ever existed in the theater. And the housewives have the advantage; there are millions more of them and they can operate in secrecy. The damsel of the theater is always in the public eye and if she blows her nose too loudly, someone makes an issue of it!

In the State of Texas, we met with financial disaster and for the Scotti Opera Company it was the beginning of our Swan Song.

Texas was even then known for its music loving public and we had booked long stays in all the important cities. But the rains came, then followed the floods with their usual heartbreaking devastation. The cotton crops were ruined, railroad ties uprooted, automobile roads inundated and trolleys at a standstill.

Even if opera lovers had had the heart to go to the theater, there was no means of transportation, and almost empty houses and very scanty box receipts were ahead of us.

Our first mishap was on the way to Houston.

We were due there that afternoon to give an evening performance of *La Bohème*. At nine o'clock that morning, most of us enjoying a well-earned sleep, our fast traveling train came to an abrupt and frightful stop. Our clothes and toilet articles were hurled to the floor and Myrtle was clinging to the upper berth. Then all was strangely quiet.

In a few minutes I could hear the Italian chorus men walking past my window and talking in their usual excitable manner. Slipping on my kimona, I ventured out to the platform and gathered this news. The floods had undermined the rail ties, our heavy engine had jumped the tracks, taking with it the scenery and orchestra cars. The engine was embedded in mud up to the axles and we were on the Texas plains for an indefinite stay.

Our business manager, Mr. X, was capable enough, but had the horrible impediment of a hare-lip. In calm moments one could understand him, but when excitement seized him, as was most often the case, he was pitiful to behold and strangulation seemed imminent. On this particular morning he was panicky and rushed about screaming his unintelligible orders. And, we of perhaps unkind but frivolous tendencies, were convulsed with laughter.

Two men walked to the nearest telephone, and an automobile was secured. In this Mr. X drove to some nearby village and telegrams were sent canceling our performance. Another engine was secured and at four o'clock that afternoon we were taken on a side track and started for Houston. Through all this confusion, and you may imagine there was plenty of it, our impresario, Scotti, slept peacefully. He emerged from his drawing room at one o'clock in his usual faultless morning attire.

"Why the train no move?" he said.

Then he was told that we had been in a wreck since nine o'clock that morning.

"Well, why you no wake me? Maybe it's better we send telegram to Houston!"

Poor Mr. X went through his story again and assured Mr. Scotti that every detail had been taken care of and our rescue engine would arrive about four o'clock in the afternoon.

"I no like this," said Scotti. "It seems like bad luck sign. I lose the cache for tonight's performance. I pay much money for the engine and I think my company go broke!"

There was no performance in Houston that night, but Myrtle and I had a special performance put on for our terror!

We had a double room at a good hotel and the windows opened into a big courtyard. We were exhausted after the long wait on the train, and after a good tubbing, we ordered dinner in our room. Myrtle confessed that she was afraid of Texas, her fiancé "Bobby"

had told her to be careful—it was a wild place and anything could happen to you. We were quietly eating our dinner, when terrifying sounds came from an adjoining room. A woman was screaming: "You are choking me!" and from the sound of her voice, I should say that the male with her was doing a good job. He replied "Of course I'm choking you and I'm going to kill you! You lied to me!"

The struggle grew and the woman's voice screamed for help. We went to the windows and several guests were looking from their windows. The woman gave a few gasps which I thought were her last, and I dashed to the house telephone.

The clerk very calmly assured me that everything was being taken care of. In a few minutes we heard the clang-clang of the ambulance—then all was quiet.

We later learned that the disturbing guests were a drunken couple who were settling a little family argument.

"See," said Myrtle, "I told you that Texas was a wild place."

We gave two performances in Texas, but the houses were not crowded as we had hoped. We played in Waco, which town was a great cotton center. The floods had ruined the cotton crop, the people were in despair and the river was now rising to another danger point. We gave three performances and the people in the three audiences would have counted as only one good house. The box-office receipts couldn't meet the chorus and orchestra payroll and there were still the principals, business staff and private train to be reckoned with.

Scotti was in the dumps, and in vain did we try to cheer him with the thought that full houses further north would balance his losses.

That night, in Waco, a little group of us sat in a tiny restaurant having ham and eggs and coffee. It was after the performance and the streets of the town were very quiet. Into this silence came shriek-

ing sirens, far off at first and then closer. It was a foreboding and terrifying sound, and upon inquiry the waiter told us that the sirens were flood warnings. The river was rising and in three hours would overflow its banks. Some families had hopefully remained in their homes, but this was their last call to safety. We were all terribly depressed and I think that even Scotti minimized his financial losses in the face of this disaster.

In a step toward economy, Mr. Scotti gave an order that no extra stage hands be engaged. Our own small staff would have to do the work.

We arrived in Lexington, Kentucky, for two performances, one being the matinee of *La Bohème*. Scotti, as always, sang his pet role of Marcello, the late beloved Orville Harrold sang Rudolfo, and I was the Musetta.

In the third act of *La Bohème* there is a winter scene with a beautiful snow storm. As done at the Metropolitan I think it is one of the loveliest scenes in opera. When our curtain rose on this third act, about two dozen snowflakes fell from above, the atmosphere cleared and then about six more silly looking snowflakes floundered around in the scene. It was ridiculous and Scotti, waiting backstage for his entrance, was muttering Italian curses at the property man.

Mimi wandered out to sing her beautiful "Addio" and in one of her pathetic moments she leaned against a tree which was in center stage. The tree gave way, the audience laughed, Mimi staggered like a tipsy woman, regained her balance and finished the aria. I was choking with laughter but recovered in time for my own entrance in the quartet. The curtain descended and Scotti exploded.

"Cheesa Christ, why we have no snow, you wanna make fool of me? And why you no fix the tree, you wanna everybody laugh at the Scotti Opera Company?"

The stage manager explained that he was short of stage hands.

In the rush to set the scene, someone had neglected to put the props behind the tree, hence it was swaying in the breeze. The man who was making the snow fall, had to rush down from above and help with other stage business.

"Well," said Scotti, "I no gonna have people laughing at my company. From now on we do *Bohème* without snow and before the performance I walk out and see if that damn tree stand up."

This order was carried out and for the remaining *Bohème* performances we had snow on the scenery, but no snow in the air!

Dear old Scotti was then about fifty-eight years old, and what with being impresario, leading baritone, and assistant manager, these were indeed days of tribulation. His voice was gone, but his artistry remained supreme.

He vocalized, as conscientiously as a young student, but to no effect; the sounds which came forth were without music and at times raucous in character. But his superb interpretations kept to their high level and his portrayals dominated every performance.

Our tour ended in Buffalo, and about an hour before we reached New York City, I went to Scotti's drawing room to bid him good-by.

The poor fellow was in tears and asked me to sit and talk with him. He said he had lost thousands of dollars on the tour and was ashamed to return to New York. He could not then give me my last week's salary, but if I would call him in a few days, he would have some money.

I telephoned Mr. Scotti, he was then living at the Hotel Vanderbilt, and although he said that he could mail my check, he wanted me to come down for tea—he must talk to someone.

Over our glasses of iced tea, Antonio Scotti again rehearsed the financial disaster of the Scotti Opera Company. He owed money and was so heavily involved in the stock market that selling his stocks at this point would only mean further disaster. He had not

left his hotel, just brooded in seclusion; he was still ashamed to meet people.

"Marietta," he said, "everybody always say Baron Scarpio is my greatest role, what do you think?"

"Well, Mr. Scotti, I used to think that, but having watched you through two seasons on the road, I now think that your greatest artistic achievement is your Chinese character Chim-Fen in *L'Oracolo!*"

"Funny you say that, so many years I think Scarpia and now I think you right. If I ever give farewell performance at the Metropolitan I think I gonna do Chim-Fen."

I was about to leave when Scotti asked me to remain for a few minutes, he had something to show me.

He placed on the table, a beautiful inlaid box and after trying about twenty keys, he finally unlocked the box, and what a treasure chest it was.

In happy reminiscing mood and with no little pride, the great artist showed me his collection of snuff-boxes and cigarette cases. They were all gifts and all handsomely bejeweled. The snuff-boxes were from crowned heads of Europe, before whom he had appeared, and they would have graced any museum. The cigarette cases were equally beautiful and must have represented a tidy sum of money. Then from a separate compartment in the box, Mr. Scotti carefully lifted two other masterpieces. One was a lady's gold mesh-bag, studded with rubies and a ring which left me gasping. The ring was a huge pigeon blood ruby. The size and color of the stone made it almost seem unreal, and I waited to hear the story of these two pieces. It was very simple; they had been gifts to a former beloved one, which had been returned to Scotti.

For many years I forgot about this treasure box, but when poor Scotti was swamped in the stock market panic, and when it was known that the former millionaire was in dire poverty, I wondered

were any of these treasures converted into moneys for his daily sustenance. I am inclined to think so, for there was no record of them at his death. I understand that some wealthy American opera-lovers sent contributions for his remaining days in Italy.

At Antonio Scotti's death, our American newspapers reported that Scotti died in poverty, and his body was followed to the grave by one mourner, a nephew. Of course, there were comments on the pathetic aspect of such a funeral procession.

But is a mourner necessarily a person who follows a casket? I think not. The Egyptians hired mourners and I have known of some East Side peasants who employed mourners for purposes of prolonged lamentations. Mr. Scotti's mourners numbered thousands and the tributes of friendship, affection and esteem which still hover about his memory can only mean that in his passing, the operatic world suffered a great loss.

## XI

### EUROPE

IN APRIL 1924, having signed another performance contract for the following season, I was planning to go Europe. I was sick unto death of standing and moving among painted scenes of Amiens, Paris, Montmartre, Seville, Florence and Bella Napoli! I wanted to see real peasants in their quaint and colorful dress. The chorus man, with his misfit costume, who one night appears as an Egyptian slave, the next night disguised as a picador, or a Neapolitan vendor, and with whom I had a bowing acquaintance, this sort of thing had long lost its lure. I wanted to see folk-dancing in its native setting, to hear beautiful music in a romantic mood, and disassociated from its usual study and hard work.

It was impossible for Jay to accompany me on this first trip, much as we had dreamed about it. His flourishing business demanded rigid supervision, and as with all American men, business with him was paramount. Time for play had to be fitted in when, and if one could.

And in remaining at home, Jay was not to be pitied in any sense. We had just bought a sizeable cruiser, which carried three men in the crew. Jay adored the water and he could have jolly week-end parties aboard the boat, while I did my own cruising among the treasured spots of Europe.

And so it was agreed, but I was still hesitating because I disliked the thought of traveling alone. There was the trip to start with, six days, at that time. Suppose I made no desirable acquaintance during the voyage, and had only books for companions. Then there were

complicated customs regulations, of which I knew nothing, foreign moneys, and finally a strange country with no welcome awaiting me.

No, I just could not face that; better a gay summer around Long Island waters, with old friends and the usual ocean of cocktails, which seem to fit in with nautical life. The barometer on a boat always registers "Dry" to the thirsty sea-dogs.

Of course there was no way of my knowing that a good traveler can orient himself on an ocean-liner, as easily and quickly as a fly wallows in molasses, and that the drinking technique on big ships was an endurance test. In 1924, we cheated Americans had to content ourselves with some retaliation, and we in turn cheated our government and our intestines, in a vain effort to allay the national thirst.

Prohibition having been unwisely thrust upon us, the devotees of John Barleycorn were forced to quaff of bath-tub gin, needle-beer, and one hundred and ten proof apple-jack! Bacchus himself must have squirmed in horror, when he realized the complete degeneration which had come upon the gentle art of drinking.

There is small wonder then, if thirsty Americans looked forward to an ocean crossing, where a sumptuous bar beckoned to parched palates. A perfect Martini, a glass of real beer, or tempting vintage wines could be had for the asking. Oh, these were days, and a "Life on the ocean wave," as the simple song goes, had little in common with a European crossing. The days and nights were given over to consistent drinking and the slogan of the times seemed to be "And damned be him that first cries, 'Hold, enough!'"

When I recently read that the Cunard liner *Berengaria* was to be scrapped, I sighed a deep sigh and said, "There goes my ship, and what sweet memories she has left with me." For I find that one gets attached to a ship and that attachment has nothing to do with the size, speed or elegance of the vessel. But it has directly to do with pleasant associations aboard the ship, and other agreeable fac-

tors which make a crossing on that ship memorable beyond all other crossings.

If the wanderlust lurks in your veins you can well understand the terrific thrill of a first ocean voyage. For years I had dreamed of seeing Paris in the spring, the English countryside, Charles Dickens' London and dear old sunny Italy.

My traveling companion on this first crossing was a young and promising contralto, a member of the Opera Company. Marion Telva had been with the company for four seasons, and had stepped from the ranks into some leading roles. She had had her first ocean crossing and her real objective in this trip was a period of study in Germany. But she was allowing for herself a few weeks of pleasure, which we agreed should be spent in Paris and Vienna. After that, I proposed to return to America and Marion was traveling on to Munich.

There were exciting days ahead, and what with obtaining my passport, with its inevitable chromo photograph, American Express money orders, a letter of credit and a wardrobe, I was running around in circles. But these circles encompassed a new enchantment and as the sailing date drew near, I was in a feverish thrill. Another dream was about to be realized, I was going to *Europe!*

Marion was many years my junior, and our friendship was yet in an embryonic stage. But she was a natural *e pluribus unum* and in eighteen years of loyalty and devotion, she has never been found wanting.

The sailing was at midnight and at ten o'clock that night our cabin looked like a bargain sale at Macy's. Enthusiastic friends pushed and milled around the stateroom. Stewards were dashing in with the usual quota of books, candy, flowers and other bon voyage packages. Then came good-bys to friends, hugs and kisses for Jay, the ship's band played "Auld Lang Syne" and we moved down the bay to Europe, adventure, and for me romance!

True enough, my steamship ticket read Paris, France, but I was

to pass through Arcadia, Nirvana, and Hades before the return voyage. And the toll I was to pay was a heavy one, in a terrific emotional upset.

Morning dawned, clear and beautiful. Through the welcome port-hole I could see, hear and smell the sea. Marion was asleep and I tip-toed to the port-hole and stood there fascinated. It was all so new, the great expanse of water, the sun just above the horizon sending shafts of color into the leaping spray, and the steady swish-swish of the waves, as our ship plowed on her way. I wanted to write a poem, I wanted to pray, but I compromised by waking Marion and suggesting breakfast.

Marion said that we must ring for our stewardess, and have our trays in bed. Only provincials and rookies went to the dining room at that weird hour. Breakfast over, we set out for the boat deck, to locate the wireless operator. We both wanted to send love messages, Marion to her fiancé and I to my beloved husband.

We were writing, and alone in the tiny room, when the door opened admitting a tall, distinguished man and a terrific gust of wind. The wind blew the radio blanks to the floor, and the gentleman picked them up, offering profound apologies. He made a few pleasantries about the delightful weather, and Marion replied. I had only given him a fleeting glance, but there must have been a powerful and instantaneous attraction at work, for a slight disturbance already quickened my pulses. And behind my little flutter, lay a very simple cause, just the sound of a beautifully modulated speaking voice—a voice whose vibrations bespoke of passion well-disciplined and culture without end.

We left the gentleman to his radio-grams; most likely he also was sending love messages, and we started out for a few turns about the deck. The day was glorious, with brilliant sunshine, a calm sea and a cloudless sky which seemed to look down in mysterious tenderness. I felt free, and detached from all persons, places and things.

After luncheon we found our deck chairs and sank into the relaxation which Father Neptune gives to those who love the sea. "Just imagine," said Marion, "no telephone calls, no appointments to keep, none to make, no rehearsals, six days of well-earned laziness."

I tried to read, but the everchanging beauty of the ocean drew me from the printed page. I could only gaze and wonder. "Do not look around," said Marion, "but whom do you suppose is sitting directly back of us?" I had no guess to make and Marion whispered that it was our morning acquaintance of the wireless station.

"Well, what of it? Surely there's no cause for excitement in the fact that the gentleman's deck chair is by accident close to us."

About five o'clock we left our deck chairs for another turn about the deck, before dressing for dinner. Halfway in our walk, we came face to face with this same man. He had walked in the opposite direction, rather than follow us.

"Hasn't this been a beautiful day?" he said. "A little bit lonely for me watching you two, giggling and laughing. I know your names, I have studied them from your deck chairs. You are Miss Mellish, you are Miss Telva and I am Mr. Julien of Boston. If you girls have no plans for an evening cocktail, you can make a lonely voyager very happy?"

Of course we had no plans at all, and if we did indulge ourselves in a cocktail, it would have been just a Dutch treat. We accepted and Julien asked us to join him at seven, giving us the number of his cabin. "I think he is grand," said Marion, "don't you?"

"No, he is an interesting and probably fascinating roué!" Marion laughed loud and long, saying that she had heard of a roué but had never met one in the flesh.

"Well, never mind what you think of him," said Marion, "he is doing a lot of thinking about you. And I will miss my bet if he does not give you a good chase on this trip."

"All right, let him chase," said I. "I have been chased before and

it might be again diverting. There is no harm in a mild flirtation. You know how dearly I love Jay and any knight-errant who hurls darts my way will be as successful as a child throwing tacks at a suit of armor."

And so, bedecked in our best and primed for fun, we ascended to B deck and found our genial host awaiting us. He looked rather prepossessing in his faultless evening attire—or had I already put on the rose colored glasses of illusion!

In any case the whole setting appealed to me. The stateroom was huge, beautifully furnished, with two real windows. The time was sunset and that particular sunset seemed also to have been arranged. I do not remember another one quite like it and the refracted purple, red and orange lights threw us into a mezzotint of coziness.

On the table was a huge dish of iced caviar, not the tiny black and tan variety which I had known, but the large savory gray pearls, from Russian waters. A steward was cooling champagne and our host moved about like a sure-footed panther, secure in his knowledge of the world, and of the women in it. Over the champagne cocktails we relaxed and became friendly fellow-passengers. Julien invited us to join him in the dining salon, but I preferred to dine at an officers' table, where we had been given places.

I secretly wanted to escape the devastating charm of this man. After all, I was not yet twenty-four hours beyond the Statue of Liberty and I must keep to my course, as the ship did to hers.

In parting, Marion said to our new friend, "You know our Mary is really like a frightened nun."

"Well," said Julien, "if she is a nun, we must at least dignify her with the title "Mother Superior." She would be the tops, even in a convent and I am certain that she is indeed superior!" So I became the Mother Superior. I had already christened Marion "Grandma," in tribute to her wisdom.

After dinner Marion and I sauntered to the after-deck and walked into a scene of further beauty. A full moon had risen behind our

course and the ship was traveling in the wake of the moonlit sea. What a magic night this was and we sank into chairs to talk and dream of "April in Paris."

If romance is in your make-up, and lunar beauties stir your emotions, you have in your memory book some moonlight nights whose poignant charm has made them eternal. This was such a night for me. In a short time, we saw our Julien strolling toward us, and with our permission he joined us. We were a carefree, harmonious trio, but after an hour Marion decided to make it a two-some. She pleaded fatigue, and went to our cabin, leaving me to the mercy of the charmer.

Julien was a master raconteur, and his brilliant conversational gifts left never a loop-hole for boredom. If I had ever considered myself a well-read person, I was now willing to admit defeat in that respect. For this man had certainly forgotten more beautiful literature than had ever passed under my eyes. When I commented on the vastness of this Atlantic Ocean, and wondered at the strange forms of life within its depths, Julien told me the legend of the submerged continent, Atlantis. True enough, there had been no proven facts as to its existence, but what a weird thought that we might now be sailing through waters which flowed over Atlantis and a lost civilization!

And as we sailed those silver seas, our discourse ran to books, mostly the old classics, and my scintillating companion spoke from profound knowledge, sprinkled with a delightful wit. But when he ascended to Parnassus and regaled me with choice bits of poetry, he was hitting below the belt, and I was already vulnerable.

I gave in to the line of least resistance and in an exquisite languor I listened to dear old love sonnets—sonnets I had long known from the printed page. Revitalized by this muse who loved them, they took on a new meaning, and fell upon ears which now had understanding. Time galloped on, and only when the distant ship's bell tolled the hour of midnight did I reluctantly return to my cabin.

Over our breakfast trays, Marion had to listen to my full heart. I was in love with the ship, with the sea and its varying moods, with this new sense of freedom and with the brilliant mind of Julien.

"Well, that is what you say," said Marion, "but Grandma sees it differently. Julien is in love with you and will wear you down with his intensity. I think you are slipping now, and I for one can understand, for he is appealingly fine, in every sense of the word!"

Somehow I never sensed any real danger in the companionship of this agreeable man. I was in love with my husband and wasn't it a well-known fact that one could not be in love with two men, at the same time? There was nothing to worry about and I dismissed the thought.

On most ocean crossings, one night is given over to the ship's concert, the proceeds of which are placed in the Seamen's Fund. At the Captain's request, Marion and I gave the entire concert. We began our program with the beautiful duet from *Madame Butterfly*. We each gave two groups of songs and closed with the "Barcarolle" from *Tales of Hoffman*. Our brilliant audience numbered over twelve hundred, Julien like a proud peacock, sat in the first row, and the money collected made a handsome total. It was a gala evening. Several of the passengers had previously heard us in Opera performances. One of these was a charming lady from Philadelphia. She was traveling with her daughter and suggested that we forego the boat-train and motor to Paris with her. Her car was meeting our boat at Cherbourg, there was plenty of room for us and the chestnut trees were in full bloom! It took little urging on her part and we accepted this happy chance to motor through Normandy.

In parting with Julien, I gave him our address in Paris, The Hotel Wagram, on the Rue de Rivoli. He was staying in Paris only ten days and I promised to have a luncheon with him. I suppose that too was a mistake, but I was weakening within myself, softening towards him, and definitely slipping.

When our ship landed at the old harbor of Cherbourg, a huge motor car of foreign make was awaiting us.

There once was a popular ballad which ran like this "When it's Apple-blossom time in Normandy," and surely quaint old Normandy offers much at any time of the year. On this crisp April morning we drove through picturesque countryside, passing the dear little pink and white farmhouses and at times through miles of chestnut trees in full bloom! I saw real Norman peasants, with their shining scrubbed faces and white lace and linen headgear. Men and women alike were busying themselves with the morning chores. Cattle were being driven to pasture, women fed chickens, churned butter, and some of them worked in the fields with their men folks. Huge oxen trudged along the roads, and we pulled aside and waited for them to pass. I saw an antiquated milk cart, much like the property cart used in the third act of *La Bohème*. And at every turn the glorious chestnut blossoms poured forth their faint sweet perfume. So this was France, and in my first thrill to this rustic beauty, I almost forgot the glamorous Paris which awaited us.

"April in Paris, chestnuts in blossom,  
Holiday tables under the trees,  
April in Paris, this is a feeling,  
No one can ever reprise.  
I never knew the charm of Spring  
Never met it face to face,  
I never knew my heart could sing  
Never missed a warm embrace,  
Till, April in Paris,  
Whom can I run to,  
What have you done to my heart?"

(Words by E. Y. Harburg, Music by Vernon Duke.)

We entered Paris about five-thirty that afternoon and our hostess, for a further delight, insisted on a drive down the Champs Elysées. The sun was setting and like a huge ball of fire, it seemed to rest

on top of the Arc de Triomphe. Gay people crowded the little outdoor cafés. Innumerable taxicabs with their silly toot-toot, circumvented the sumptuous limousines. Lovers walked arm in arm, stopping openly to exchange a kiss, and everywhere were the trees—beautiful trees which bent down in sweet benediction on the Parisians who loved them. The very air was charged with the joy of living, and I too pulsated to the intoxicating atmosphere.

We arrived at our hotel to find that the room we had engaged was not available, typical of the French. But for a few francs extra we could have a little suite, parlor, bedroom and bath. One glance at this adorable petite apartment decided us, and with exclamations of delight we began to unpack in rooms which might have sheltered Manon—so French and intimate they were. The carpet was American Beauty red, the walls were paneled in a yellow silk damask, and of all things, there was a tiny piano in a corner of the sitting-room. Our windows faced the Rue Juliette and by stretching our necks a bit, we could see the Gardens of the Tuilleries.

Marion planned that we should take our first Parisian dinner at a little restaurant back of the "Madeleine," and we walked through interesting side streets to Bernard's, then small and cozy. It has since been enlarged and consequently lost its intimate atmosphere.

The French *carte du jour* was fascinating and the prices more so, for the franc was very low and my multiplication told me that an artichoke vinaigrette, would cost about six cents! We followed that course with lamb kidneys cooked in white wine, quantities of French bread, a green salad and such a dessert! The dessert was billed "*Petites fraises de bois, avec crème*" (little strawberries of the woods with cream). The berries were sweet and tiny, peculiar to certain localities of France and the cream was of a mousse consistency. We allowed ourselves a bottle of Barsac wine with our feast. In United States money we paid about forty cents each for our dinners.

We came home by another route. Marion said I must see a boulevard and the Café de la Paix. In America, our streets are only thoroughfares, but these wide sidewalks were places of recreation and I had the feeling of watching some out-door pageant. People strolled leisurely or relaxed in the sidewalk cafés. How these Parisians enjoyed their city, and a tranquil happiness prevailed, a *laissez-faire* contentment, foreign to American nerves.

About nine-o'clock the next morning, our tiny door-bell squeaked and in my night dress I went into the sitting room to ask "Who is there?" But he was already there, the valet de chambre, bearing a huge box of flowers. "Bon jour, Madame," and he bowed low, while I ran into the bedroom for my kimona. "What kind of place is this?" I said to Marion. "A waiter walks in upon you and does not even apologize. He is in a red and gold uniform and looks like the Duc de Guise!"

With hysterical laughter Marion replied, "He is the valet de chambre. This is La Belle France, my dear; everything is different. The French are always intine, even the servants, they have no patience with what they term our false modesty. You will be lucky if he does not catch you in the bath-tub. The servants all have pass keys, they ring the bell and enter simultaneously. You have to bolt the door for privacy." What a country!

The box contained a glorious selection of flowers, including red roses, and there was a note to me, asking us both to take luncheon that day with Julien. We tried to reach him on the telephone, Marion making the first attempt. After cursing the telephone system, the French language and her own inability to use it, Marion banged up the receiver in disgust.

I, feeling more secure in the French tongue, took my turn and after several "Hallow's" and "Occupés," I resigned to the American way of telephoning in France. I wrote a note and sent it by our porter. One might signal Mars as easily as one could obtain telephone communication in those days.

We took luncheon at the beautiful Café Laurent, rendez-vous for the epicureans. We dined under the trees and in Julien's eyes I read that he was in love with me. In my own heart, I grudgingly admitted that his presence thrilled me, and no doubt I sent responsive smiles his way.

Then there followed a week of lavish entertainment and few high spots of Paris escaped me. Julien was the guide and he was a walking encyclopedia of the interesting and beautiful. This by the way, had been his twentieth crossing, he was ten years my senior, and a bachelor.

We went to the Opera and the Opera Comique, and we held hands during the "Depuis le jour" in *Louise*. We dined in the brilliant restaurants in Paris, in the Bois and in many Russian restaurants. We ate equally delicious food in many small haunts. We visited the museums and drove to the races, then at St. Cloud. We spent a morning at Versailles, and had luncheon at Le Petit Trianon.

One lovely day, we had luncheon at Armenonville in the Bois, a restaurant whose elegance and beautiful setting distinguished it as one of the most outstanding in Paris.

Returning through the Bois, the old and young trees were wearing their soft greens of early May, Julien suggested that we visit the museum of the Luxembourg in the Luxembourg Gardens.

Children were playing, some with their nurses, lovers sauntered arm in arm and old folks sat on benches in sweet meditation. Spring was in the air, in the Gardens and in my heart, but its sweet magic was of short duration. When I left the Museum of Luxembourg a wintry and portentous chill had enveloped me, due to a powerful psychic experience. The art of sculpture has always filled me with awe and intense admiration. For the other arts I have an adequate comprehension, but when the sculptor chisels life and perfection upon a cold block of marble, I am confounded with wonder. In the exhibition room where the sculpture was, we stopped to admire one

masterpiece after another and then quietly came to a subject marked "Le Souvenir" by Antoine Mercier.

With my limited powers I must try to describe this statue. The marble itself was a pale cream tint, not dead white, and where the high spots stood in relief, one saw a faint rosy tint which gave one the feeling that here dwelt warmth and life. Against a tall rectangular column, was a small bench and on this bench sat a woman who might have been in her early thirties. Her back rested against the column, her eyes were closed, and her head drooped to one side. She was clothed in draperies and through the beautiful marble folds one saw the outline of her finely molded body. Her strong hands were crossed in her lap and in them she held a few roses. There were more roses at her feet, and at the top of the column, seemingly unobserved by her, there were two birds carrying branches in their beaks. Her whole bodily posture suggested a weary despair, as if she had accepted great sorrow with dumb resignation.

This woman's story told me that she had walked in beauty and had known life and love at its fullest. Tragedy had robbed her of every joy and hope was dead. But remembrance was still so sweet that there was no trace of bitterness in this resignation and a blessed peace had come to her lonely heart.

Julien, too was deeply moved by the story in the marble, and while he discussed the exquisite workmanship of the sculptor, I tried to shake off the foreboding message which "Souvenir" had sent me.

We left the statue, and went to see the masterpieces of painting in an adjoining room. And the fact that I do not remember many paintings in that superb collection, proves to me even today, that "Souvenir" had completely obsessed me, and I looked out of eyes which saw only the heartbreaking resignation of Mercier's sculpture. I walked around among the paintings almost oblivious to the beauty about me, for a strange urge was calling me back to the beautiful marble in the other room.

I apologized to Julien, asked him to remain where he was, I wanted to return and be alone with "Souvenir." I sat down before the statue and told myself that I was becoming morbid and verging on the melodramatic. It was Spring, I was happy, Jay was well and successful, Julien was fascinating and I was in love again, Romance was coming my way and here in Paris I would not succumb to a depressing mood. But I was whistling in the dark, for the tragic loneliness of "Souvenir" frightened me and I seemed to see myself in her place.

I tried to thrust this thought from my mind, but the longer I gazed at this woman, the stronger became the tie between us.

I was deeply moved and at a loss to fathom my own reaction. Like Galatea, she seemed to take on life and spellbound as I was, I tried to piece together her pathetic story. Yes, it was a love tragedy, she had lost her lover, or, her lover-husband, or her lover had betrayed her, the beautiful roses told me of love. And the souvenir of that love was so beautiful that in Tennyson's words, it was

". . . better to have loved and lost,  
Than never to have loved at all."

From some resource, probably a spiritual one, she had achieved resignation and peace was on its way—no doubt those were olive branches which the little birds were bringing.

The experience affected me beyond belief and when Julien returned I was brushing away some truant tears.

With his sweet understanding, Julien made no comment but as we were leaving the Museum he stopped at the souvenir post-card concession and bought me three prints of Mercier's "Souvenir." In years that followed I gave two to friends and I have my copy now.

In 1926 I went to see "Souvenir," but the work had been moved to The Louvre and I postponed my trip there, from time to time. I never saw her again, but I knew all too soon that she had talked to me truthfully, wisely and lovingly.

Marion made some of these excursions with us, but on most occasions I was alone with Julien, Marion being with some American friends then residing in Paris.

In this round of gaiety, I spent many sleepless nights, for an emotional disturbance was wrecking my peace of mind. Over and over I told myself—you are in love with this whole trip, with the sea, the ship, Paris, its boulevards, its thousand and one enchantments, but not with Julien. When you return to New York you will forget that you ever knew him. He has bewitched you, but it is temporary. Oh, how I lied to my heart, for I was in love up to my ears and refused to admit it. If in a weak moment I dreamed of being in Julien's arms that sweet dream was frightened away by nightmares of early religious training, and by inhibitions, which refused to leave me.

But I was not hiding much from Julien. His all-seeing eye had looked into my heart and with the utmost delicacy and infinite kindness, he told me that he knew I cared deeply for him. He proposed to be patient with my inner struggle. He said that he was constructive, not destructive. He admired my constancy, and would do nothing to wreck a happy marriage.

Then came the night of our parting. There was a downpour of rain, which the French like to call a shower, and we took dinner at a little Russian restaurant, on the Boissy d'Anglas. Our hearts were very full and what with the deluge of rain outside and the melancholy music of the Russian refugees, we both played hard at being cheerful.

After dinner we returned to our petit salon, as I now called it. Marion was attending the Opera so we were alone. In this sweet French room, so conducive to love, we talked of everything except the throbbing fires which were consuming us. I played his favorite waltz "A la Bien aimée!" (to the beloved one) and I tried to sing, but I just could not manage that. Finally Julien rose to go and stretching out his arms he said, "Darling, I want very much to kiss

you good-by, but only if you wish it." And my answer to that, was to walk straight into those arms and lift my face to be kissed. The pent-up passion which was unleashed in that first kiss, was frightening in its intensity. Now I knew, and so did he how much we really meant to each other. Julien left this thought with me, that if after my return to America I found myself unhappy in my marriage, or that I loved him more than I loved my husband, I had only to say the word, he would be waiting. The rest would be simple. Julien was a wealthy man, he would liquidate his assets and obtain a Parisian divorce for me. We would then marry, and live in Europe. I could only reply that I loved two men, a most pitiful situation for me, and an insoluble problem.

If life has ever placed you between two such fires, you will have understanding for my plight. But if such is not the case, I beg you to hesitate before you deride the thought of it all—*it can happen to you!*

With stiff upper lips and a firm handclasp, we said "good-by" and never did those two words convey more truth and still, less truth. For lips can propose, while the heart disposes and conflict is born with its resultant struggles.

Marion returned to find me in tears. "He is gone," I said, "and he has taken so much of my heart with him. I love him and I love Jay. Dear God, what will become of me!"

The morning brought a dramatic climax, when our "Duc de Guise" entered with the usual box of red roses and a love letter. That letter should have been kept in the archives, to serve as a model for lovers less gifted than my scholarly Julien. It was a masterpiece, for his written word was as forceful and expressive as his speech.

A friend kept the letter for two years. I often re-read it, and thought I had memorized it. But so much water had passed over the dam since 1924 that the love letter went with other treasured memories. But I can condense its four pages into the one thought

which remains with me, "Mary darlin', I love you, I love you, I love you! . . . I am Le Grand Blessé, and I shall continue to march in the procession. Although broken and bent, I shall carry high the torch of hope, and love you every step of the way. 'It bloweth where it listeth, and no man knoweth why.'"

During the world war, a wounded soldier was called Le Blessé, but one who was *incurably* wounded was called Le Grand Blessé.

Now I ask you, was not that letter a tid-bit for your breakfast tray, and the perfect guarantee for nervous indigestion? I indulged in a good cry and declared that if I knew just where Julien could be reached, I would call him back.

"No, you would not," said Marion, "you make that statement because you know that you are playing safe. Julien is now aboard the ship and maybe your idea of surrender is well-timed. Paris in the spring, has demoralized more than one sturdy conscience. When we shake its enchanting dust from our heels, you will be able to organize your scattered wits, and any decision you make will be the result of sane thought. Of course you will never forget Julien, who could? But I daresay, that when you return to America and Jay's love, Julien will become just a sweet memory."

We stayed on in Paris for another week and while I saw many points of interest and spent happy hours with friends, nothing seemed the same. The streets, boulevards and avenues shrieked of Julien's absence and I missed him more than I dared to admit.

We left for Vienna, often called the Paris of Austria and how I looked forward to seeing this gay European metropolis. The names of Mozart, Beethoven, Gluck, Schubert, Brahms and the Strausses were all associated with this great musical center. Marion asked our train conductor as to the exchange of money and we found that an American dollar was worth sixty-six thousand kronen! This was appalling, and in order to negotiate with any degree of accuracy, we put these figures on paper and each of us carried her copy.

\$1.00—	66000	kronen
.50—	33000	“
.25—	16000	“
.12—	8000	“
.06—	4000	“

We could not be annoyed with the value of pennies and when we did exchange our money, five dollars in the paper money, could not be contained in our ordinary purses. So we bought large patent leather market bags, and shopping became a test of one's mental arithmetic. And then I remembered having seen a news reel in the post-war days,—a huge truck was carrying one hundred dollars in paper marks, to a German bank. Some of the paper fluttered to the street and passers-by did not even bother to pick it up!

In 1924, six years after the armistice, Paris had taken on some of her former gaiety but the Viennese capital had not even lifted her head from the crushing world war. The city itself was singularly beautiful, with its wide sidewalks, handsome boulevards and spacious avenues lined with lovely old trees. The public buildings were of fine proportions and elegant in their sculptured ornamentation. There were churches without number, and at every turn of the eye beauty awaited the traveler.

But the Viennese themselves were like whipped dogs, and their poverty and depressed spirits soon communicated itself to us. The children begged from us, and although we tipped most generously, the waiters and taxi drivers cursed us, under their breaths, and muttered vile things about the rich Americans! The shopkeepers were frigidly polite, but when we opened our big bags of paper money, we could feel their silent resentment. We had a modest luncheon at the smart Hotel Bristol, and in our exchange money, it was about a dollar per person. The check was elaborately written on a huge sheet of paper and the total was some hundred and thirty thousand kronen. I sent it home as a souvenir to my nephew.

We visited St. Stephen's Cathedral and its solemn Gothic gran-

deur marks it as one of the most beautiful churches in Europe. And strange as it may seem, I prayed for Jay and Julien!

Then we went to the humble Church of the Capuchins, and in the crypt, are the tombs of former Austrian sovereigns. A fat, lazy monk, tired I suppose of his job as Cook's guide, led us into the subterranean vaults. And here were the massive bronze sarcophagi, mute tributes to the wealth and glory of days now gone. The tomb of the beloved Maria Theresa was by far the most elaborate one, and when the monk told us how many kronen it represented, we could only gasp in wonder.

We lunched in a colorful outdoor garden, but had to leave our table under the trees, when a singing bird directly above Marion's soup lamentably allowed his enthusiasm to get the better of him. True, we craved atmosphere, but not to this extent.

The first day we arrived in Vienna, I foolishly gave some money to a waiter and asked him to send a cable, which was addressed to Julien at sea. He bowed low, said "Kuss die hand, Madame," never sent the message and pocketed the money!

We were staying at a second-rate hotel called Kummer Haus. It was clean and comfortable but almost devoid of guests and when we went into the dining room, about six waiters hovered about our table, always saying "Kuss die hand, Madame." There was no bath with our huge room, and we paid daily for a hot tub and some towels. At the end of the hall were the toilet facilities, if anything could be facile in those quarters. Two doors were marked, one "Herren" and the other "Damen" meaning Gentlemen and Ladies. A very thin partition about six feet high, separates the lady from the male occupant. And what with the friendly rattle of a newspaper, unhappy sounds and clouds of smoke rolling over the partition, an American is disconcerted and resents the enforced and unpleasant intimacy.

On the second night in Vienna, we set out to hear the premiere of *Maritza*, a delightful operetta later produced in America. We

needed to hear good music and be uplifted, for the atmosphere of Vienna was most depressing, and a terrific let-down, after gay Páree. We arrived late at the theater, and Marion carrying the market bag of kronen, got into line at the box-office. I watched her count the pieces of paper, and saw the ticket seller push the money away, while he shook his head and said, "Nein, nein."

"Well," said Marion, "we cannot hear *Maritza* tonight."

"But why?"

"We do not have enough money."

"Do you mean to say that this bag of money will not buy two seats?"

"No. The top balcony and first balcony are sold out. There are orchestra seats but tonight they are three dollars each and we only have five dollars with us!"

It was too late to return to our hotel for more money, and we strolled down a little side street, where facing us was a theater with silent movies. We went in and saw the German version of *The Sheik*, with Rudolph Valentino!

Returning home we commented on the fact, that these Viennese music lovers, although feeling dire privation, saw to it that their souls were fed, regardless of the cost. I wish I had known Vienna before the World War—what a glorious Mecca it must have been.

Our third day found us sinking into the unhappy mood of the sad populace. We tried to throw it off, and told our porter to engage a carriage for us, we would take a ride to some cultural centers and call on Madame Maria Jeritza. Marion knew her quite well, and I had only a bowing acquaintance—I had sung a *Helmwige*, to her lovely portrayal of *Sieglinde*. When we descended to the street, the sight of the vehicle which awaited us threw us into shrieks of laughter. And this in turn enraged the driver.

It was the feast day of a Saint and Catholic Vienna was decorated for the occasion. Our open carriage was strung with white peonies, the driver's huge top hat was trimmed with peonies and each

horse, there were two, wore a large wreath of peonies around his neck!

As we jogged along over some cobble stone pavements, I told Marion that my sentiments of the moment were expressed in the lines of an old song,

"If the folks back home could see me now,  
I wonder what-the-Hell they'd say!"

We stopped at the flower market and feasted our eyes on the lavish display of beauty. For twenty cents, in our money, we bought enough forget-me-nots to fill Madame Jeritza's apartment. But she was never to receive them, for upon arriving at her residence, we learned that on the day previous, she had departed for Budapest. We drove down the imposing Ringstrasse, still hemmed in by peonies and swamped with forget-me-nots. People stared at us, and I jokingly said to Marion, "Maybe they think we are Royalty, out for an airing!"

When paying our taxi driver, Marion said, "Let us give him an extra tip so he will not grumble." After counting out the fare, she passed him the regular tip and gave him a paper note of big denomination, explaining that this was extra. In all, our tip amounted to over two dollars, to him several thousand kronen. He demanded more, said we had plenty left in the bag, that it was Viennese money and meant nothing to us. Marion, in her fluent German, told him to go on his way or she would call the police, for she was rightly enraged. He drove away muttering German curses on our heads. Marion translated these curses, and I can tell you they were most uncomplimentary. We were getting well fed up with these people and the city was getting on our nerves.

Our original plan was to have stayed in Vienna a week, and then go on to picturesque Budapest. But one more unhappy experience that evening, put the final damper on our spirits, and decided our immediate return to Paris.

We were dining in our hotel and sat at a little table near a window. Our hotel had a reputation for good food, and we heard that in prosperous times, one had to wait for a table. Not so tonight, for there were only two other occupants of the dining room. We ordered a typical German meal with steins of the excellent Vienna beer. The cost of this simple repast was about sixty cents each. We had only begun our meal, when a woman with two grown children took her place at the window and they watched every mouthful we ate. It was most uncomfortable. Before long, four people joined this little group, and seven were watching us. Marion caught some of their remarks and translated to me. They said that it was an outrage, that rich Americans had money enough to cross the ocean and enjoy this gorgeous food (Wiener Schnitzel and German fried potatoes), while the poor Viennese were practically starving.

Need I say that the food was choking us, and we hurried to our room to make plans for our return to Paris. We left the next morning, and after Marion had paid all bills and tipped in all directions, a further blockade awaited us. Seven men formed a line at the exit to the street. The head waiter was in long tails and there were other waiters and porters, some of whom we had never seen.

"What do they want?" I asked Marion.

"More tips," she replied, and opening the bag she handed each one a paper note.

They bowed, scraped the ground, and said "Kuss die hand, Madame," but I knew very well what they would like to have said!

We had wired our American friends in Paris to secure a little apartment for us. They were at the train when we pulled into Paris and I can tell you that we' hugged and kissed them, and nearly kissed the engineer who drove our train.

We spent two delightful weeks in Paris. There was more sight-seeing, the Opera, the Opera Comique, the Theatre Francais, the

Folies Bergère where Maurice Chevalier was the adored attraction. And there were fittings for clothes in the French manner!

The gullible American woman would arrange an appointment for a three o'clock fitting. She arrived on time, to encounter a surprised saleswoman. "Madame must have made a mistake, the fitting is for tomorrow," and believing, Madame returns the next day to find that the fitter is spending the week-end at the sea-shore with her sweetheart! Madame must make another appointment. Of course, a deposit had been paid on the order, so the weary American trudges back and forth to the shop, collecting her French wardrobe.

The French are exquisite liars and they do it with such a charm of manner, that you continue to believe—at least in your first season in Paris.

I had ordered some lovely French handmade lingerie, before I left for Vienna. Upon my return to Paris, I made two trips for fittings and two more to collect my garments, but never did I collect them. On one occasion Madame, the suave owner of the shop, was crying over a half-finished bottle of red wine. She begged me to understand and pardon her. Her adored husband had a new sweetheart. At first she did not worry so much, but now the affair was of too long duration. Madame was so crushed, that she had even neglected her duties at the shop. But I was such a sweet American lady, she liked me, and in return for my patience she would put extra touches of beauty on my lingerie. She promised by all that was holy, to have the merchandise at my hotel, in time for my sailing date. I had no further word from her. In despair, I gave up the thought of my deposit and refused to make another visit to the left bank of the Seine, where she lived.

My boat-train was to leave Paris at nine in the morning and on the day of my sailing we had an early breakfast, with the usual vile French coffee. About seven-thirty, a young seamstress appeared at our door, to deliver a huge card-board box which contained my furbelows. My baggage had gone the night before and there was

no room for them in my bag. I was wearing a smart Parisian costume and had hoped to look like the well-dressed traveler. But with flowers from Marion, books from friends, an elongated box of lingerie, and a suit-case, I looked like the weary American I was.

The bill which accompanied this purchase was an endless source of amusement, and I kept it for years. The nightdresses had appealing names, which I had known, but I did not dream that they would be so billed.

- 1 Robe du nuit  
"Pour lui"—For him
- 1 Robe du nuit  
"Les Amants"—The Lovers
- 2 Robes du nuit  
"La bien aimée"—The beloved one
- 1 Robe du nuit  
"Le Garçon"—The Boy

This last one was tailor-made, no lace and no embroidery. Each garment, including chemise and drawers, was embroidered with my name Mary, copied after my own signature. This ravishing underwear was a frightful debauch for my purse, but an equally lovely thrill for my artistic soul. It was a long step from the flannel drawers of earlier days. But I was traveling now, in every sense of the word. And travel does things *to you and for you*.

I returned on the *S.S. France* and she was then one of the smart French liners. I stood at the rail as the ship pulled out, and in the mellow sunset I watched the coastline of France until the little pink houses dipped below the horizon. I was sad, my heart was heavy and blinding tears filled my eyes. Some unnameable disturbance was gripping me. France had given me much of beauty and romance, but had taken a toll, in peace of mind. When would I see my beloved France again, if ever, would Jay sail with me next summer, and could I recapture any of the thrills of that first crossing? I wondered.

## XII

### LIGHT OPERA—AND EUROPE AGAIN

JAY MET the ship and I fell into his arms with unrestrained joy. It was heavenly to see him and to be home again.

We spent a sweet summer, with long week-ends on our new cruiser, and in the company of old friends.

I dutifully tried to put Julien out of my mind, but his smile, his voice and his sensitive hands kept tugging at my heart strings.

In the early fall, he telephoned and asked me to lunch with him. I met him at Sherry's on Park Avenue and went to the date without qualms. I felt strong and cured of my love malady. But in the moment of his devastating smile, and warm handclasp, I suffered a relapse, from which I never entirely recovered. We agreed that there would be no further communication between us and I promised to advise Julien as to the time of my first appearance at the Metropolitan Opera House. He had never seen me on that stage and I hoped that my performance would be Musetta, in *La Bohème*.

I returned from that luncheon a most unhappy soul. I loved two men, and the hopelessness of the whole thing began to tell on my nervous system. I sank into the despicable state of self-pity, and became moody and irritable. I tried to reason it out, with head work, but my heart threw a wrench into the gears and I got no place.

Over and over I compared the two men, and told myself that they had one powerful asset in common—they both possessed charming, forceful personalities, and character. Jay was handsome, Julien was not comely, but was distinguished and ten years older. Jay was simple in his tastes, and had a practical mind. Julien was

sophisticated and artistic to his finger tips, a dreamer and a talking poet. Jay was eager to learn and full of the joy of living. Julien had lived fully, was a post-graduate of Oxford and a scholar. Jay had a good sense of humor but Julien's wit was brilliant. Jay was temperate in his habits but Julien bore the earmarks of a sensualist. Jay at thirty-eight was like a healthy over-grown boy. Julien at forty-eight, was just a beloved vagabond.

Judge me, if you are so inclined and blame me if you will, but never say that it was a simple problem to untangle. It was an emotional upset such as I would not wish upon Satan himself. I wanted to be true to myself and play fair with two men who loved me, if you can imagine such a paradox. My inner struggle was fast developing into a neurosis.

In the winter of 1925 I answered the call to light opera. There was money to be made and I saw a chance to sublimate my love worries and send my energies into the channel of hard work.

A then well-known producer who had successfully launched *The Chocolate Soldier*, had a new operetta in rehearsal. He telephoned me one afternoon to say that his new play was glorious, had been in rehearsal four weeks and he had tried five prima donnas for the outstanding role of Catherine of Russia. Mr. Whitney, that was his name, had two splendid artists, Natja the girl and Prince Potemkin the lover. But he was desperate to find an artist who could portray the role of Catherine, that Tartarean Queen. He said that the musical score was one of the most beautiful that ever was put on paper, and in that respect he was entirely correct. For the score was a lovely arrangement of Tschaikowsky's best loved melodies. And this arrangement had been done by a talented Hungarian named Karl Hajos.

I agreed to see Mr. Whitney, Mr. Hajos and Harry B. Smith who had written the lyrics and made the appointment for that evening. At dinner Jay and I talked it over and decided that if the musical

score pleased me and Mr. Whitney met my salary demands, I would step over to Broadway. With Jay, Mr. Whitney and Mr. Smith, as an audience, I went through the score with Hajos at the piano.

If you love Tschaikowsky, I need only tell you that the "Chanson Triste," "June Barcarolle," "Romance" and "Symphony Pathétique" are easy to take. The score was a dream of melody, and duck soup for a singer. And with the beautiful "Polannaise" from Eugene Onegin and the stirring Russian National Anthem, there was nothing, musically, to be desired. In my mind's ear, I could hear the orchestration of these lovely numbers and I felt the urge to play the haughty Czarina, the lady who lived for love.

Mr. Whitney raved and said I was made for the role. We would have signed then and there, but I was not released from the Metropolitan Opera Company and had no Equity contract.

I had asked a salary of one thousand dollars a week and we compromised at eight hundred and fifty dollars on the road, and seven hundred and fifty in New York City.

After the three men left our apartment Jay and I jumped up and down like delighted children. Of course the show would run for a year, maybe two, then on to London for further successes. Jay's earning capacity had increased and with my big earnings, we would soon be in blankets of wealth. It was exhilarating, and I took a flight into another of my Seventh Heavens!

At four o'clock the next day, I saw Mr. Gatti-Casazza and obtained my release from the contract. He wished me well, said I would make a beautiful Catherine, and expected to see my name in headlights. At four-thirty, I signed with the Actors' Equity Association and at five I signed Mr. Whitney's contract for the singing role in *Natja*. I closed the doors upon opera and concert work, and threw myself heart and soul into rehearsals for the new show.

We opened in February at Philadelphia, and played there two weeks. Opening night was a brilliant one, Jay was there with a

dozen friends from New York. My concert manager Mr. Haensel, was in the audience as was also a young tenor and old friend, Richard Crooks, now of international fame.

The reviews in the morning papers gave little to the book, and less to the comedy roles. They waxed enthusiastic over the musical score and my notices were complimentary beyond my wildest dreams. We played to packed houses and in the second week used the sign "standing room only."

I lived at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel, in a luxurious suite. I had brought with me, my Swedish house-maid, Olga, a capable spinster of uncertain years. She was to be my theater maid, until we reached New York. And as it turned out, she became more nuisance than help, for poor Olga ran into her own emotional disturbance and it worried me plenty. A debonair young chorus man, of the pansy variety, made love nightly to my unsuspecting maid. It seems that while I was out front, in my prolonged singing scenes, this gigolo, in exotic Russian uniform, wooed my stolid Swede. He poured sweet nothings into her starved ears, and she was all a-twitter. The glorious music, the lights, costumes, scenery and general back-stage excitement had gotten into her blood and poor Olga was in a trance. She told me that she felt that this young buck was in love with her. And only after long sermons and drastic exhortation did I round up her scattered senses. When I suggested that he might be interested in Olga's tidy savings account, she said that she mentioned that to him, but declared that she was taking it to Sweden, to be married. I rescued her from this cavorting Lothario, but two years later she married a big Swede who had just been discharged from an insane asylum. He was penniless and on her money, they traveled to Sweden, Olga making a most presentable picture in my discarded clothes. I later heard, from another maid, that after two years of married bliss Olga's husband again went balmy, and was in another asylum. Olga, broken in heart and spirit, was again in

household service. The poor soul paid dearly for her acquaintance with the male of the species, but at least she will not die wondering.

Marion, my ever faithful go-between, had telephoned Julien and advised him not to come to Philadelphia, it was my request. And the first time he was to see the Mother Superior on any stage, she would, strangely enough, be in the character of the notorious Catherine of Russia. But Julien did send flowers during my two weeks in Philadelphia and on Valentine's Day, I received a bunch of violets, as huge as a Persian melon.

Just before the show left for New York, came the first bad news. Due to some managerial disputes, Mr. Whitney was unable to lease the New Amsterdam Theatre on 42nd Street, then under Ziegfeld supervision. And we had to move to the old Knickerbocker, below the deadline of theater activity.

We opened in New York in March 1925, the first night bringing friends, relations from Albany and many of my fellow-artists from the Metropolitan Opera. My costumes were nothing short of stunning and I spent nearly three hundred dollars on imitation pearls, diamonds and Catherine's favorite jewel, the emerald. I know that I never sang to better advantage and gave an excellent performance of the tyrannical and amorous Czarina.

The newspaper reviews followed along the lines of the Philadelphia critics—the music was superb, the book very weak and the comedy almost negligible. My personal notices were again highly complimentary. Deems Taylor wrote that I “sang extremely well and looked disturbingly beautiful.”

The girl who played Natja, was a former artist of Covent Garden and the Opera Comique. The man who sang Prince Potemkin was a fine concert artist. And they were both sincere performers. We all three principals worked like Trojans to keep the show alive and although music lovers returned again and again to hear the lovely Tchaikowsky score, we could not swing the play into suc-

cess. We lacked appeal to the masses. Russia, Catherine, and the Crimea, had little interest for the tired business man. He regaled himself at Ziegfeld's Follies, where the beautiful undressed girls were "packing them in"—as the theater puts it.

After two weeks, our audience began to thin out, Mr. Whitney's purse could not carry our heavy pay-roll and after one month's run we rang down the curtain on *Natja*.

So for six short weeks, I was a Broadway prima donna, made good money and was happy in the beautiful role of Catherine. I could scarcely believe that it was now all over.

So the score of *Natja* went on the shelf, where its dead ink communes with a thousand other unsuccessful efforts. And what heartaches there must be on many shelves, in many lands. For here lies in mute failure, the dead ink of poets, playwrights and musicians.

And now for the first time in seven years, I was back in private life, with no musical activity ahead and very little urge for anything. We entertained a lot in our new apartment which had a big studio living room. Jay was a jovial and generous host and many Metropolitan artists crowded our parties and brought joy with them. Jay had found his business friends boring in comparison to my artistic circle. He complained that his dinner guests and their wives talked of the stock market, the cute pranks of their children and the servant problem. And my Bohemian friends brought with them a care-free atmosphere and entertainment without end. He loved them all and they in turn adopted him for a good comrade.

We spent a pleasant summer, with a few weeks at Lake George and long, lazy week-ends aboard our boat.

I kept well under cover my secret love for Julien, and far removed from his powerful attraction I was able to cope with the situation. Then too, there was the comfortable feeling which follows the performance of one's duty and I would assuage my troubled mind

with the thought that my sin had only been mental, I was still a faithful wife!

But on many a summer's night I lolled on the afterdeck of our boat, and missed my poet-lover. The blue heavens were studded with a million stars, the gentle waters lopped against the sides of our boat as she lay at anchor, and the music from some beautiful Victrola records put quite the finishing touch upon my passive nostalgia. I would sink into an exquisite reverie and only the constant hammering at my sensitive conscience would rescue me from my dangerous dreams. Following this rescue, I would assume the role of penitent, and scold myself for my unworthiness. My unsuspecting husband, then became the chief beneficiary of my extreme kindness and demonstrative affection. It seems so easy to think about it now, but living through it, I was as serene as one might feel in a pent-house on Mt. Vesuvius!

In the year of 1926 I saw Julien on two occasions, once for luncheon and later I took dinner with him in his apartment—a treasure-nook, and the perfect setting for his artistic soul. It was a daring step, my going to his abode, but Jay was having dinner with men friends that evening and then going on to the prize-fights. I could count on at least four hours of his absence. The dinner was not a success gastronomically speaking, with nervous indigestion destroying all food values. Julien begged to be further assured that I was happy and still loved my husband, and I could only reply with complete honesty, that these facts were true. For the state of dementia praecox into which I had worked myself was not really one of unhappiness and Jay had done nothing to perpetrate it.

Julien with tact and the sweet understanding of years, said that he had heard of a woman loving two men, and of a man loving two women. And in cases, where all three persons were fine and decent, the problem remained insoluble.

I returned to my apartment about ten that evening distraught

and melancholy. Julien's seething kisses were still on my lips, hair, eyes, neck and a bad re-action followed.

I stood at my window and looked into the cold murky waters of the Hudson River. With tears streaming down my cheeks, I told myself that I could and would solve the problem. A simple geometrical problem, with the triangle, proves that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points. In my triangle, the straight line was very plain that night, and led from my window into the moving stream. I could not swim a stroke and if I should let my body down into that grave, it would be carried down stream, like Tennyson's "Elaine." Then at least I would be true to myself, decent with Jay and kind to Julien, who suffered much, in the knowledge that I was living with another man. I was truly tortured by the conflict, and loathed the deceit in which I lived. But I pulled myself out of the hideous crisis, took some aspirin and was asleep when Jay returned.

Old Father Time was to soon change the pattern of my life and he was now weaving the small threads. I was to drink deep of tragedy, before I earned the way to peace.

In the spring of 1926 the Shubert offices sent for me. It was their third invitation and it is a pity that I ever heeded the call. J. J. Shubert was in a bad spot, he had *Princess Flavia* in rehearsal, could find no satisfactory prima donna, the chorus was restless with rehearsals, and expenses were mounting high. Would I take the lead, this was on Wednesday afternoon, and open *Princess Flavia* in Newark, New Jersey, the *following* Monday night. This meant four days in which to learn the script and the music, rehearse and create the role and allow time for costume fittings.

I agreed to sign the contract and open the show. I made only one stipulation, that Shubert send one of his first conductors to my apartment and we would work musically, all day Thursday. The

music was a beautiful score by the talented Sigmund Romberg whose *Blossom Time* and *Student Prince* still live in haunting melodies.

On Friday morning I had memorized the music and rehearsed all day, carrying the script in my hand. On Saturday I rehearsed all day and part of the night, without the script, but with the help of a prompter. On Sunday I went through the dress rehearsal letter perfect and Monday night we opened in Newark.

After the first act, Mr. Shubert's lawyer walked into my dressing-room and handed me a piece of paper. I unfolded it and for a moment I refused to believe what my eyes saw—it was a two week's dismissal notice. The Actor's Equity Association rules that if an artist's contract is to be canceled, the artist must be given two weeks' notice and that notice must be presented during the first performance.

I was stunned and naïvely asked if there was not a mistake. No, there was no mistake, and the gentleman made a polite exit.

Now I ask you to try and imagine the ordeal which faced me. Crushed and choking with unshed tears, I walked on to do the next act—for the show must go on. I do not know yet how I ever managed to sing that third act, for the shock of my dismissal had completely unnerved me and I walked around in a daze.

When the curtain descended, a friendly audience re-called me many times, and with a heart bursting with pain, I smiled and bowed my thanks for the applause. I received excellent press notices, which are now in my scrap-book.

After the performance I tried to see J. J. Shubert, but he was not to be seen then, nor during that entire week.

Jay was for taking me out of the show, but that was not possible, I had a contract and must play for the two weeks. The show moved to Brooklyn in the second week and there I caught up with Shubert. At first he refused to discuss things, but I was not to be ignored, and under pressure he delivered himself in this manner.

"Never again will anyone sing the music of *Princess Flavia* as you have sung it. And no matter who sings the role, I shall always hear your beautiful top notes soaring through the theater. *But*, the stage picture does not suit me, your figure is too mature (fat) and I had to look elsewhere."

That was meager consolation for me, inasmuch as Shubert had carefully eyed my figure before asking me to sign the contract. From other sources I learned that I had only been engaged in an emergency and to open the show. From my first entrance into rehearsal, a young and promising Shubert artist had understudied my every move, gesture and voice inflection, easy for her, after my creative work. This artist opened the show in New York, and I think later went with it to London.

Naturally, I never went to see the production, that would have been an unnecessary crucifixion, my first wounds were deep enough.

Now at this period I thought that my figure was a perfect thirty-six. Upon careful inspection before the mirror, I had to admit that much of the avoirdupois had gone into my bust. And the generous façade which I paraded was a liability, in creating the illusion of an eighteen-year-old Princess. In evening dress, my high upholstery looked not unlike a pair of apple dumplings! For the early Dutch masters, I would have been an excellent model. But on Broadway, the thin girl with the debutante slouch was in vogue, and I had nothing in common with her. Of course I could have submitted to that diabolical operation, which removes one's breast. I have two friends who went through this ordeal and I saw one of the results. The huge breasts which formerly lay upon the stomach and crawled under the arms, had been carved to delicate and juvenile proportions. In their places, stood two firm breasts, not unlike those of a fifteen-year-old girl, and upon these peach-like domes, the old nipples had been daintily stitched.

I turned my back on the theater forever and vowed that no offer

would again tempt me. There did follow another offer in the form of a thirty weeks' vaudeville tour, with an itinerary which covered more than half the United States and paid big money. But I was firm. I had now passed my fortieth year, which in the theater, is the beginning of the end. My fighting spirit had been dulled, and I foresaw the futility of competing with youth. If financial stress indicated itself, I no doubt would have worked on for years, with or without success. But we had more than enough for our simple needs, Jay was generous to a degree and I planned to go down the years with him, in a happy companionable life.

The spring of 1926, was one of the happiest in my changing life. Jay sailed to Europe with me, on the lovely old *Aquitania*. The crossing was ideally lovely and I had many a vicarious thrill watching Jay's reaction to all that was new and different.

In Paris, we stayed at the Hotel Ambassadeurs, then quite new. I hated it, because it was so American in character. But English was spoken freely there and Jay was more at ease, than trying to negotiate with the "frogs"—as he called the Frenchmen.

And when I say that we *did* Paris, we really did. We made a fleeting trip to the dear old Cathedrals and the museums but most of our time was spent in American carousing and we missed but few of the well-known spots.

We dined at the sumptuous Pré-Catelan in the Bois and at the modest Reine Pédauque, beloved rendezvous of Anatole France.

We crossed the Seine and sat at the big Café Dome, while a strange world of people walked around us. There were a few artists who had arrived, many who hoped to arrive, and many more frustrated ones, now ne'er do well failures. There were perverts of both sexes, who openly showed their love, if I do not desecrate that beautiful word in describing their unnatural attachments. Cocottes freely plied their trade, Turkish vendors staggered under their oriental rugs, acrobats did tricks on the sidewalk, waiters rushed

back and forth and it was all an unhealthy bedlam. But we were seeing Paris, and it was something to see.

We stopped at an Apache den, but left before finishing our drinks. The Apaches and their girl friends threw bloodthirsty glances and insulting remarks. We were glad to escape into fresh air.

With a party of friends we visited a notorious bawdy house on the Rue Blondell. Thirty naked women greeted us, ranging in age from eighteen to thirty, blonde, brunette and titian beauties—so called. When I say naked, they wore evening slippers and either a rose or ribbon in the hair. They danced about us, while the French Madame, their ugly ring-master, ordered champagne sent to our table—it was a rule of the house. I understand that these unfortunate females, when youth has departed and disease moved in, are usually to be found in narcotic haunts, or beneath the waters of the river Seine. But on this evening the girls were gay, with little thought of the Hell in which they moved. After seeing an obscene dance and listening to remarks which were terrifying in their filthy import, Jay and I left the party, and sauntered down the boulevards. Madame the proprietress, was loathe to see us depart, and promised that the big show, to be given in upper chambers, would be well worth waiting for. We could not see it that way and refused further invitations to visit well-known dives in Paris.

On several occasions I saw processions of young children, boys or girls. They wore blue smocks and were accompanied by a nun or a priest. Upon inquiry I learned that they were war orphans. We drove through the war fronts at Château-Thierry, Soissons and the Hindenburg lines. In this last area, the gruesome trenches were almost intact and the rusty, twisted barbed wire entanglements stood out in bold relief.

En route to these battlegrounds we passed through the ruin that had come to this section of France. Whole villages had been wiped

out and their untenanted homes cried aloud in their desolation. Here and there a half a house was left standing and in this ruin, the peasants had re-established a home. I saw people living in houses which had no trace of a roof. I wondered how they managed in rain or snow. Farm houses had been deserted and where once had thrived the healthy crops, the eye saw only barren wastes of land. I heard that under the supervision of Anne Morgan, and through her fine generosity, many of the villages were being reconstructed. Such pitiful devastation embittered me and, now in 1939, I still hear that the Treaty of Versailles was unfair to Germany. To my knowledge, not a square inch of German soil was uprooted, no German homes were demolished, no German women and children were terrorized, and fertile fields were undisturbed. If Germany had won the World War, can we believe that the ruthless Prussians would have suddenly turned angelic and given the Allies a sweet and comforting treaty, with apologies for their unwarranted destruction? My imagination refuses to carry me to these heights.

We passed by the French, German and English cemeteries and stopped at a huge American cemetery. As far as one could see, there were rows and rows of little white crosses. These crosses marked the resting places of the American soldiers who had died to make the world safe for democracy!

And on this day of August 25th, 1939, I await with terror to hear that Germany is again the aggressor. The neurotic, godless tyrant, Herr Hitler, who travels in a bullet proof shirt, rides in an armored car, and lives like a gangster in his hiding-place, this man is the leader of a once glorious nation.

Having done Paris to the point of exhaustion, Jay and I planned a three weeks' motor trip. He engaged a car of foreign make and a chauffeur who spoke several languages. The chauffeur was French by birth, beautifully educated and had been an interpreter during the war. Two days before we left, we wandered into the Ritz

bar, favorite rendezvous for the thirsty Americans. And here we met a dear friend from New York. She had recently lost her husband and was lonely beyond words. We told her of our proposed trip, and a hungry look came into her eyes.

In our hotel Jay and I discussed the advisability of including her in our trip. We knew Rose for a most companionable and lovable soul, she was a seasoned traveler, and we felt that her presence could only add to the pleasure of our trip, and so it did, for that matter. When we asked her to join us, she was deeply touched and accepted with tears of gratitude. She said that we could never realize what we had done for her. But I was to realize it all too soon. For in less than two years, Marion and her new husband took lonely me on an unforgettable trip through Italy.

We three good companions left Paris early one morning, and started for the French Alps. We stayed over night at Grenoble and after that our route was entirely mountainous with new vistas of beauty at every turn. We stopped at quaint inns, suggested by our chauffeur and relished the always perfect cuisine. At times we could see the azure blue of the Mediterranean, then our road would wind down into a rocky pass and after a long climb there would again appear the Mediterranean, nearer, but still so far away.

One afternoon as we were traveling along the high mountain road, we simultaneously exclaimed, "Look, there is a rainbow in the valley!" And there it was, a wondrous iridescent arc, hovering above the tiny hamlet. We were thrilled and waxed ecstatic at the thought of riding above the rainbow.

We reached the Riviera in the early evening of the third day, having stopped at Grasse to visit the perfume factories. Then we went on to Cannes and Nice. At the latter place we stayed at the imposing Hotel Negresco. We each had beautiful suites, with balconies facing the blue Mediterranean. In season these suites rented for twenty-five and thirty-five dollars a day—far beyond the ordinary

purse. But the season was early, and the hotel business very slow, so the French manager quickly accepted Jay's offer of ten dollars a day. We spent some delightful lazy days at Nice, motoring to Monte Carlo at night. And in the sumptuous gambling rooms, I was lucky enough to win sixty American dollars.

Leaving Nice, we motored along the Italian Riviera, beautiful in spots, but not even a distant cousin to its French sister. And before we reached Genoa, I was sure that I had seen enough squalor, poverty and dirt to fill my quota. These Italian peasants, mostly fisher folks, lived in stone huts, with stone floors, the doors were wide open and other than a table, chairs and beds, there was no attempt at furnishings. Men, women and children were barefoot, and in rags. An unholy odor pervaded these tiny villages, and even in the bright sunshine, dampness clung to these stone dwellings, which people called home. We saw a cow, in one of these rooms, and through another doorway, we saw two goats under a table. In some of the streets through which we had to pass, there was room for only one vehicle at a time, and in these narrow byways we had plenty of time for observation. There was no attempt at open plumbing, and the stench which poured from these hovels would paralyze a healthy nostril.

I recently read that Mussolini had spent millions on new roads, and at a great cost had restored some Roman ruins. He now has extra pennies, since he attached Ethiopia and Albania, if that makes any sense. And I wonder if he ever cleaned up at home, in the slums of Naples, and the approaching villages near Genoa.

We left uninteresting Genoa, drove north to Milan and then on to beautiful Lake Como. Some American friends had a villa there, and we stayed at the romantic Villa d'Este, on the lake.

Madame Dombre, elegant and a patrician, owned and operated the lovely Villa d'Este. Swiss by birth, and Italian by marriage and adoption, she looked like a Velasquez painting. She spoke of An-

tonio Scotti, who frequently spent his summers in this perfect spot. And upon hearing that I knew Scotti and had been a member of the Metropolitan Opera Company, Madame Dombre extended her highest form of hospitality. She opened the seldom used Napoleon Room, and gave a formal dinner in our honor. I have traveled much since 1926 and dined in high places, but Madame Dombre's dinner remains a classic, and the paragon of gracious dining.

Napoleon had brought Josephine to this room, in days gone by, hence the name given to the room. The original tapestries still clung to the walls and their beauty, well preserved by a covering of glass panels, showed but few signs of deterioration. The room had the aura of old grandeur and the table with its rare linen, priceless china and massive silver, could have welcomed with dignity, the return of Napoleon and Josephine. The windows on our left looked into a grove of cypress trees, and for over two hours our party of ten, dined on delectable victuals and sipped of costly ambrosial wines.

The following evening, and as a return courtesy, I sang with the orchestra in the grand ballroom at Villa d'Este. I sang arias from *La Bohème*, *Tosca*, and *Gianni Schicci*, the orchestra having these numbers on hand. For an encore, I sang to my own piano accompaniment, the Czarina's song hit from *Natja*, "Moonlight and Love." I suppose there were about two hundred guests in that ballroom and after my singing, an American rushed through the crowd to grasp my hand and congratulate me. He was a former New York music critic, and was at this time editing his own musical magazine.

"You sang beautifully," he said, "I have heard you at the Opera, in concert and in *Natja*, but never has your voice sounded as it did tonight. What has happened to you?"

"Well, nothing has exactly happened to me, but this paradise and the moon on Lake Como have really inspired me. Then too, I am enjoying the blessed relaxation which comes from the knowledge that I am not singing for critics!"

We left Lake Como with reluctance, for its beauty had compelled us to over stay our visit. Driving north through the Alps, we came upon the grandeur that is Switzerland. It is not for my feeble pen and limited vocabulary to describe a sojourn in the Swiss Alps. My own reaction was one of exultation and after exhausting thrills, I gave myself up to wonder of this sublime phase of nature.

We took luncheon at Interlaken and from the porch of the hotel, we looked upon a dazzling white cloud, it seemed, and of course it was the lovely Jungfrau resplendent in the noonday sun. We had planned to ascend to the Jungfrau, but from where we sat, it now seemed an impossible feat. As a school-girl I had read in my third and fourth readers, as they were called, moving stories of the St. Bernard Monks and their faithful dogs, of avalanches which sometimes tumbled down and destroyed the little villages in their paths. And there were pictures too, of a Swiss châlet. And now, my childlike dreams were to be realized, I was seeing the wonder and beauty of Switzerland.

We spent the night at a picturesque inn, in the valley of Lauterbrunnen. This valley is about a half mile in width and is hemmed in by lofty mountain peaks. A short distance up the valley, is a gigantic falls which leaps over the mountain top. Its deafening roar made sleep almost impossible and during the night, I made three trips to the open window and feasted my eyes upon the diaphanous beauty. Now and then, a ray of moonlight broke through the clouds, and the fantastic silver spray flung itself in wild abandon. I decided then and there, that when I returned to Switzerland, probably the following summer, I would make a long stay in this sweet vale at Lauterbrunnen. But alas and alack, for the plans we make, time has taught me to fully enjoy the present, and for the future make no plans, just keep an inner light burning before the shrine of hope.

The next afternoon we started on our first lap of the journey to

the Jungfrau. A tiny electric train pulled us slowly and smoothly up the mountain sides and soon we came to the dead end of vegetation. Little drifts of snow began to appear and from under their winter blankets, the delicate Eidelweiss bloomed against a white background.

In the early evening our train stopped at the Zweiger Glacier Hotel, (the second glacier) where we were to spend the night. This modern hospice, literally hung on the side of a mountain cliff. The ground was covered with snow and although it was early June, we were cold.

The office, and huge dining room in the hotel were on a level with the railway platform, and one had the queer sensation of going down-stairs to bedrooms, which seemed to be suspended in air. These rooms were heated by sizable electric stoves and gave out enough heat for the English blood stream, but we steam-heated Americans felt the cold. Jay, Rose, and myself were enthralled with the place and our vocabulary of adjectives was depleted in expressing our delight.

After a splendid meal, the amiable host joined our table. Like most Europeans, he was an accomplished linguist and proved very entertaining. He insisted upon offering us some Vodka, and if you must indulge in that lightning liquor, the Alps is the place for it! And by the same token, if one is allergic to scenic beauty, the Alps are not conducive to sleep. During that night, I was awakened by a dazzling white light, of such intensity that one could read a newspaper, if such a commonplace activity so interested you.

Putting on warm slippers and a heavy coat over my thin silk wrapper, I went to the window and gazed upon a phenomenon which these eyes will never again see. A full moon had arisen in the valley below us. Its silver light fell upon the vast acreage of snow which surrounded us, and the snow in turn refracted the white light into our room. I was then, and am now, one who likes to

share thrills. I seem to suffocate, if I cannot rhapsodize, when I am confronted with the unusual and the beautiful.

I aroused Jay from a sound sleep, and my wild insistence, made him think that we were moving away on an avalanche! We had heard the distant roar of one, during the night.

With arms around each other, we looked out upon this vast, silent beauty and of course I had to cry a little. My tear ducts have a way of misbehaving upon the slightest emotional provocation. I do not know how long we stood there but in the short time, a thought came to me, which was worth a journey to the Alps. I realized, and for all time to come, my own utter unimportance in the scheme of things. I had never felt myself important, but then I felt infinitesimal, and negligible, and that is as it should be.

Up to the time that I was about twenty-three years old, I had communed with God only in Catholic Churches. It stupidly never occurred to me that prayers may ascend on high, even when they are made on a street-car, the Fifth Avenue bus, or during a symphony orchestral performance—prayer had definitely associated itself with church. And when I left the Catholic Church and its ritual, I found myself praying in strange places, and feeling that God could hear me. And no man-built church has ever made me feel so near to God as did those nights and days in the Swiss Alps. When I said "The Lord's Prayer," as taught to us by Jesus Christ, I laid special emphasis on the closing lines.

For *thine* is the *Kingdom*, the *Power* and the *Glory!*"

After breakfast, and while waiting for our electric conveyance, our genial host joined us and pointed to a dark speck, on a distant mountain side. The black speck on the white snow was barely visible to the naked eye, but through a powerful telescope we saw a chamois, the graceful lines of his body and alert position of the head, indicated that the animal was at attention. Our host told us

that the beautiful creature was on duty as a sentinel, the flock of chamois were feeding in a valley below. If we waited long enough, this agile creature would dash down to the feeding grounds and another chamois would relieve him, on guard. These mountain antelope have evolved a fine system of defense, and to trap one in his wild haunts must tickle the heart of a hunter, if such a hunter has a heart.

Jay insisted on bringing home a beautiful and expensive chamois head, which had been mounted. I told Jay that I could never look into those accusing eyes, and he must take the thing to his office. The chamois head later hung in Jay's office and I never saw it again. It was lost with most of my dreams, in the fall of 1927!

We reached the Jungfrau about noon, and found ourselves in an attractive restaurant, whose walls were glass and through which we saw the snow covered Alps. At the luncheon table, we found that all three of us were suffering from snow-blindness and Jay bought us each a pair of sun glasses.

After luncheon we repaired to a big shed behind the restaurant, to equip ourselves for a short climb. We each had a staff and a high pair of hob-nailed shoes. It seemed that each shoe weighed not less than ten pounds. With a guide ahead of us, we laboriously trudged along, slipping on the ice, bewildered, exhilarated and I, at the same time, terrified. We had not been out five minutes when panic seized me, I wanted to jump. I have always had this phobia in high places. The guide suggested that we return to the shed and he would tie me to him, so that I would feel secure. So back we went, and when we emerged, all three of us were tied with a heavy rope and climbed in Alpine fashion. If one of us slipped the other three would pull him or her to safety.

We climbed for about twenty minutes and came to a small plateau, where stood a few fellow travelers. Surely, there can be no more breath-taking grandeur than the sight of these mountain

peaks, in brilliant sunshine. Some dare-devil Swiss were skiing on a mountain side, two brave souls, with a guide were struggling in a climb to the Matterhorn, and far below us was a faint dark outline that was Interlaken.

On our descent from the Jungfrau we were noticeably quiet, each one of us, still deeply moved by the solemn beauty of the Alps. We stopped for passengers at the Zweiger Glacier and some Swiss peasants in native costume boarded our little train. They yodeled and sang native songs, and when we got out at Interlaken they bade us a friendly "Auf wiedersehen."

We made a trip to Lake Geneva and from the lovely Hotel Beau Rivage, we saw Mt. Blanc in the distance. We later visited Lausanne, Zurich and left Switzerland by way of Basel.

We covered much ground in Switzerland and drove through sweet hamlets and peaceful towns. And everywhere and on all sides, we met with outstanding cleanliness. The people, the houses, the roadways and the restaurants seemed to have been scrubbed to a shining point. If there was poverty, I did not recognize it, for in the most simple homes, one saw spotless white curtains at the windows, gay little window boxes with flowering plants, and you knew that clean orderly housekeeping was an inborn rule with these people.

We came into the picturesque Rhine country and stopped at Mulhausen, Strassbourg, Nancy, Metz, Verdun, Rheims and then Paris.

In Mulhausen, or Mule-House as we later named it, we met with a revolting experience. After a fine evening meal at our hotel, we strolled down a main street, mostly for exercise before retiring.

We passed a small restaurant, from whence came cheerful music. Jay suggested that we drop in and have a liquer. The entrance to the restaurant was through swinging doors. We found ourselves in a long narrow room, the center of which was reserved for dancing. Small tables for two or four, were along the sides of the room and

at two tables, couples were quietly drinking. At each of the other tables, a young girl sat alone. These girls wore cheap, shabby evening clothes, and their tired painted faces revealed their horrible profession,—they were waiting for clients or customers, or whatever you may call the males who frequented the place. We had ordered a crème-de-menthe and Jay suggested that we hurry and depart, we had made a mistake. He asked for his check and the waiter showed his anger at our leaving so soon. He motioned to a particularly bold looking girl, and she crossed over to our table. She asked if any one spoke German, I pleaded not guilty, but said that I did understand French. And in bad Alsatian French she said,

“Is this charming man your husband?”

“Yes, he is.”

“Well, if Madame is agreeable to it, I can give him a very pleasant time and for very little money. We have rooms upstairs and you and your friend can wait here and enjoy the dancing!”

When I recovered from this unbelievable offer, I tried to freeze her into silence. But she was made of brass, and there was no melting. She went on to say that perhaps Rose, our traveling companion was pining for love and if so one of the girls could arrange to make her happy.

During this conversation Jay and Rose were frankly inquisitive and kept pulling at my arm and saying,

“What is it, what does she want?”

I whispered to them, the content of her nefarious suggestion and they like myself, were appalled. We hurried from the place, with their vulgar curses in our ears and Jay said,

“Well, I’ll be damned. It’s the most outrageous thing I have ever heard of and when I tell the fellows in New York, they just will not believe me. I guess we are getting near to Paris.”

We reached Verdun about five o’clock on a beautiful summer’s day and stayed at a small hotel which faced the former big hotel, now in ruins. In fact from our windows there seemed to be nothing

but ruins, with here and there a house standing intact, and the streets were practically deserted. After dinner we walked along the little streets, women in black sat at their doorsteps and the atmosphere was funereal.

We passed a little candy store and in the window were some lovely porcelain boxes of exquisite coloring. Outside the shop sat an old woman of perhaps seventy, a younger woman of forty and a girl about nine. They were all looking hopelessly into space. Rose and I went into the shop, solely with the thought of helping these desolate women.

Rose bought three boxes and I bought two and the young woman was pleased with the sale. I talked with her and she said that no one ever entered the shop, other than a few tourists.

The boxes were beautiful, the price was prohibitive in francs, and in our money was about two dollars each. One of the boxes I gave to a friend and the other one, now in my living room, never fails to draw attention and admiration. The war had taken the woman's husband, two brothers and her father had died of grief. As she said, "We lost all our men, but it was for France and *Vive la France!*"

It was now twilight and a sinister stillness fell upon the streets. Our own foot-falls seemed noisy and if I believed in ghosts, I should say that we were disturbing their haunts. We returned to our hotel heartsick and depressed.

Rose kept to her room the next day and our chauffeur took us to the forts of Verdun, Vaux and Douaumont. At Douaumont there was in construction, a huge mausoleum and monument. It was called Ossuaire de Douaumont, and was to be the final resting place for the bones of *forty thousand* unidentified dead.

Not far from this imposing structure was a small Catholic Chapel, a long narrow wooden building, the temporary quarters of these same bones. Not knowing the horrors which awaited us, we entered the little Chapel. From the door at one end a very narrow aisle led to an altar. Candles were lighted on the altar and a venerable old

priest was reading his prayers. On both sides of the aisle and banked to the ceiling were wooden boxes, coffin shaped. I had gone but a little distance into the chapel when I stopped, my heart seemed to freeze within me and I felt faint. The sides and ends of many of the boxes had fallen away, and I saw the ghastly white bones of skulls, hands, feet, arms and legs. They were so close, that had I turned suddenly, they would have touched my arm. My reaction was indescribable. Jay was walking ahead of me and I called to him to go on, I would meet him outside.

I stepped into the sunshine, and in the field where I stood, there were clusters of gay red poppies, that had toiled not, neither had they spun, they had just lifted their faces to the sun and lived on in simple beauty. I had become nauseated and promptly gave up my luncheon. The heel of my shoe caught onto something, and I found that I had run into an empty upturned tin can, which was protruding from the ground. Part of the red label was visible, it had contained Campbell's pork and beans! Further observation disclosed more tin cans, soldier shoes and part of a rusty helmet.

Jay returned almost immediately and found me on the verge of hysteria. I am not given to hysteria, but this sickening ordeal was more than I could take.

Jay too was visibly affected, we canceled our plans for the afternoon and drove back to the hotel where I nursed a violent headache and went to bed without my dinner. As I lay in that little room in Verdun, I thought of these bones which had been gathered up and piled without discrimination into the wooden coffins. In one box there might be the skull of a Roman Catholic, the leg of a Protestant and the arm of a Jew, their blanched bones intermingled in death. And I like to think, that the brave souls of these men are still buddies, in a happy hunting ground, where there is neither bigotry, intolerance, nor greed.

I ranted, and raved, and asserted the impossibility of another big war. Now about twenty years later, man in his greed is again en-

gaged in efforts to kill and destroy. What means all this talk of a higher civilization and where has it brought us? In this present European war, where does savagery stop and civilization begin? Have we as yet learned anything from the field poppy who leaves all to God or have we thrown aside His teachings and allied ourselves under the banner of some new fiend.

We arrived in Rheims in the early morning and made straight for the grand old cathedral. Considering that it had been shelled for three years, its present state of preservation seemed a miracle. Workmen were busy restoring its beauty, this being made possible by the generosity of the late John D. Rockefeller. I love old cathedrals, with their dank smell of stale incense, their ornate stained glass and their worn out benches, which have seen centuries of piety. We loitered in and about the cathedral until luncheon and then visited the wine cellars.

During the war, these semi-dungeons served as classrooms for the children of Rheims, and a French workman showed us where the Catholic Mass had been held, during that period. Now the champagne industry was in full swing and men and women in blue smocks were sorting, bottling and labeling the dreamy nectar. Before the war, visitors to the champagne cellars were invited to sample this peerless liquid, but the wine-makers had suffered great losses and necessary economy was now the rule.

We returned to Paris, tired, happy and grateful in words, and tips, to our ever gracious and competent chauffeur—I just remembered that his name was Paul.

Rose left for London to visit her son, and Jay and I sailed for home on the *Aquitania*. I was loaded down with smart French clothes, perfumes to the point of asphyxiation and souvenirs from each country we had visited. It was all in all a dream trip, and I am so grateful to have had it. Now in the light of present day affairs, I think that it was my travel Swan Song.

## *Part Three*



## XIII

### *PRELUDE TO DISASTER*

**I**N THE six weeks we had been abroad I did not miss Julien. Jay had been all sufficient to my happiness, and if I sent Julien some passing thoughts, it was only at times when I was profoundly moved by the beautiful and artistic—for he was always associated with these.

But returning from the trip, I sat in my deck chair, stared at the open pages of my book, and this is what my mind read—it was all very well when the intriguing tempter was three thousand miles away. Temptation was dulled, but only dormant and you will soon be in New York. What are you going to do then? Your neurosis has passed and you have known peace; surely any struggle is worth that. Do not see him again, ever; that is the way out. Think of the whole thing as an interesting and lovely interlude. Of course he will call you, as soon as he knows you have returned. And if he does not, should you not call him? But maybe he is ill, and you cannot be heartless. Would it not be awful if he had died in your absence—I mean would it not be better for all of us? Oh well, Time takes care of these things, you are borrowing trouble. Read your book and be calm in the knowledge that you have everything under control.

In the fall of 1926, it was October to be exact, Julien called me and asked me to take luncheon with him. I accepted so quickly that the poor dear nearly jumped through the telephone. And after I had hung up the receiver, I called myself every vile name in and out of the dictionary. With this reproof out of my system I tingled with joy at the thought of seeing him.

The next day I spent two hours at a beauty parlor and in a smart Parisian costume I appeared for luncheon at the Crillon Restaurant.

On the surface, we were both calm and to the other diners we probably appeared as unromantic as a long-married couple. After all, we were not in Paris and if this was the time, it was not the place for "Hands across the table." But the strong under-currents were at work and the nerves of my stomach were all a-quiver. We ate little, and as we pushed the delicious food around the plates, we talked of everything but our own problem—each of us cleverly side-stepping the thoughts between us. It was a tense banter of words, with the usual havoc in my nerve centers.

After luncheon Julien returned to his office and I walked blocks and blocks along Park Avenue, oblivious to the world about me, inducing calm into a heart which had just fertilized turmoil.

But the love-melancholia has its own charm, secretive and selfish. It belongs only to you and sharing it seems unthinkable. It is like taking a lone walk through a cool dark woods. The vibrant solitude of the place tells you things and you in turn confide your secrets to the trusty trees. You would not want to share that walk, or its memory, with anyone in the world—it just belongs to you.

And I have known stormy nights at my house in the country, when the trees bent under a howling wind, a cold rain dashed against the window panes and at times the house would seem to tremble at the fury of the elements. With Paddy, my Irish terrier, I have sat before a log fire and reveled in my solitude. The very outside disturbance made me deeply grateful for the peace and comfort within. A contemplative mood sets in, and my heart and I have a cozy chat—we bare our secrets, formulate plans, make decisions, and dream dreams. And whether a maelstrom or a happy ending is the outcome of my introspection, I cherish these moments and resent any intrusion.

But a busy New York thoroughfare is not the happy medium for

contemplation and as I walked along in the crisp October sunshine, I bumped into more than one irate pedestrian. A taxi-driver put me in my place, for I stepped from the curb, just as his cab was turning the corner. He put on the brakes and yelled at me, "Say you, where in the hell do you think you're goin'?"

I meekly stepped back on the sidewalk but I made this mental observation—yes, he is right—where in the hell am I going—I wish I knew.

If an emotional disturbance has never upset your equilibrium, and you have never repressed a sex urge, do not try to understand my upheaval; you never could.

I once said, that if I had a choice of being, in another incarnation, I should like to be a cow, I suppose that her placidity makes me envious. She is useful too, and we thrive on her milk and butter. In death she graces our table, and her dismembered parts form a large part of our sustenance. And what a life she has, grazing in fields of sweet clover, roaming up lovely hillsides and walking in cool valleys. After leisurely digesting her food, she rests under the shade of a friendly tree, with no thought of the morrow. When the bull is brought to her, she receives his attentions with measured indifference, seldom yearns for his return engagement, and goes peacefully on her way. A stupid existence you may say, but if peace is happiness surely the cow seems to have captured it. My later thoughts on a reincarnation suggest the busy queen bee, who destroys the male, after he has served her purpose.

At stated intervals, we had to entertain some of Jay's business friends and that night we elected to suffer with a Mr. and Mrs. Clodhopper. For once it would be a relief to have them, I was in no mood to face Jay's believing eyes, and guests, even these, would relieve the tension of the day.

Mr. Clodhopper was not so bad, in a crowd he could get by. He was easy on the eyes and pleasant in manner. His conversational

powers were a minus quantity but he was evidently aware of this fact and talked little.

Mrs. Clodhopper was the quintessence of all that is commonplace and irritable, even her appearance annoyed me. Perched on her short fat body, was a small empty head and her eyes were like those of a mink. Her clothes were all frills and furbelows and she wore expensive jewelry. Her idea of being affable was to giggle continuously and her smooth cerebrum offered no lead to intelligent conversation. She talked much of food and drink, she herself being the consumer's delight and on this occasion she waxed enthusiastic over the new Louis XIV bed which had lately been installed in her French bedroom.

She knew nothing about that gay old monarch and had never been to France, but some unscrupulous decorator had convinced her that she belonged in French surroundings. I shuddered to think of Mrs. Clodhopper in that Louis XIV bed, but who knows, maybe DuBarry, Pompadour or de Montespan had bequeathed to her their priceless secrets in the art of love. And maybe in that French bedroom, Mrs. Clodhopper released her talents and became interesting and even entertaining. I knew that she possessed a subtle charm for Clodhopper, he treated her with affectionate courtesy. But not until she waxed kittenish in describing her French bedroom, did I realize wherein lay that charm.

After dinner she always asked me to sing and professed a great liking for the music of *La Bohème* which she pronounced "Le Boo-heam!"

When these humdrum guests departed, Jay and I took a stiff drink and said "Thank God that is over. We will not have to entertain them again until spring!"

In January of 1927, my dear friend Rose arranged a dinner at her apartment, a dinner for three, herself, Julien and me. Jay was taking dinner with men friends and going to a prize-fight, one of his favorite recreations.

Rose's apartment like herself, was artistic to the smallest detail and she does things with perfection. She loves love, lovers and intrigue and under the circumstances made the ideal hostess.

Her rooms were invitingly cozy, with a lively fire crackling in the grate, a profusion of spring flowers and mellow candle light which fell upon the beautifully laid table. It was a perfect setting for the breakdown, to which I was consciously headed. After dinner Rose discreetly left for the theater and Julien and I sat before a cozy fire talking of Paris, of the sweet hours we had spent there, when we danced to the lovely tune of "Tea for Two." Of what might have been, we talked too. With no pressure from Julien, other than his own enchantment, I surrendered to the idea that our love must be consummated—I just could not go on like this. The price would be terrific, and I should have to pay, one always does. But was I not paying every day for the repression which was undermining my nervous system? And we agreed that the place must be France, maybe when the chestnuts were in bloom, and we would wait and live on until "April in Paris."

Paris is kind to lovers and conducive to love, but we would not tarry there too long, there would be many American tourists and we must be circumspect. After a few days in a French hotel, unfrequented by Americans, we would depart for the château country. We would stay at Blois, in the Touraine, and make little excursions to the glorious castles of the old French royalty.

Julien had just finished reading a comprehensive book on the old châteaux and he told me of Amboise, where now rests the remains of Leonardo da Vinci, of Chambord built by Francis I. Some eighteen hundred men had labored twelve years in its construction and it contained some four hundred rooms and no bathroom! The castle of Chenonceaux, Julien said, was built for love. Henry II had given it to his favorite, Diane de Poitiers. As for the Touraine country, I would be happy there, for I had long

known and loved it through Balzac, Rabelais, and George Moore. What beautiful word pictures Julien drew and I drank eagerly from his artistic fount. I was sure that it would be easy for me to slip away to Europe for a few weeks. Jay was going to sell his cruiser and buy a speed boat, he would naturally be keen to try her out in the spring and Europe would have no lure for him.

With sworn promises, devastating kisses and hopes deferred, we left Rose's apartment about ten o'clock and Julien drove in a quiet snowstorm to within three blocks of my home. I walked those three blocks and every snowflake that touched my face was just a chestnut blossom, for it was already April in my heart.

So much for my plans, and when after a tedious winter, April did burst upon us, my plans were scattered like October's leaves, and my heart as cheery as a London fog.

For Jay and I were again sailing for Europe. He had a yen to "do" Paris again and yearned for the gaiety of the boulevards. His boat, he said, could wait. We would return in June and there would be plenty of time to enjoy the new "water demon," as I called it. I received the news of our forthcoming trip with passive joy. I was keen to go to Europe, of course, but I had dreamed of a romantic love-affair and the thought of a prosaic trip held little lure for me.

In Jay I had love, respect, companionship and security, but I wanted to overflow the cup and add a dash of romance. From my academic philosophy I tried to evolve a few sane lines of thought and after traveling around in the usual circles, I found myself using the trite but comforting idea—maybe it's all for the best!

When I finally telephoned Julien that we were sailing the next week and on the *Berengaria*, he was in despair. Kind and lovable sage that he was, he made no complaint, but there was desolate resignation in his voice when he said that he would make other plans, and call me before we sailed.

He telephoned me the day before our departure and said that

he was making a long deferred business trip to South America. He would visit Brazil, Chili and the Argentine, leaving in May and returning in September. We exchanged a few comforting love words and with a lump in my throat, I told him "Cheerio, I'll be seeing you!"

I wanted to have a good cry, but I put up a strong defense along these lines—Julien can charm the birds off the tree. He will sit on the after deck of the South American liner and put the works on some unsuspecting female. With a cigarette in his long lean interesting hand, he will recite poetry and his low infectious laugh will warm the cockles of her heart. He is romantic and a love bird of prey to the unwary. Of course he says that I am the one woman he has searched for and I know that he loves me, but what fun he must have had in the years of searching. Perhaps I am just another scalp to hang on his belt, but I do not care, he is a grand warrior and if I must lose my head, I would rather have my scalp on his belt than on any other belt in the world.

But these monological observations gave little consolation, for I was in love, and reason, in its most efficient operation, loses out, when the heart yearns.

This 1927 crossing with Jay, and our last one together, was the usual gay and care-free voyage. We met some charming fellow passengers and dropped them at Cherbourg, as often happens with shipboard acquaintances.

April in Paris, so far as weather was concerned, may have been November in New York. The skies were cloudy, the hotel rooms chilly, and there was much rain. But we were there to kill time in gaiety, and we dined, danced, went sight-seeing, shopping and cocktailing. We repeated these activities, ad nauseam.

At the end of three weeks, we had exhausted ourselves and boredom moved in, a danger signal at any time. I was for moving on to Italy and argued to the point of exhaustion upon the beauty that must await us in Venice, Rome, Florence and Naples.

Jay held out for our return to America, where the new boat lay at anchor in the Hudson River. I have always hated life on small boats, possibly because I cannot swim and in bad seas which we often encountered, I have been terrified. Now that I was upon European soil, I had no desire to return to a summer at home. New London, Marble Head, Block Island, Port Washington, Montauk and the Columbia Yacht Club were old stories. And we made a happy compromise, Jay would return to his own form of pleasure and I would go with a kindred soul to the beauty of Italy.

Lauretta, a pianist of distinction, was in Paris during our sojourn there. She was American born, and of Irish parentage, but a continental, if I ever knew one. Her student days had been spent in Berlin and Paris. She had a brilliant mind, deep appreciation for beauty, a grand sense of humor and we had been close friends since my early days of school teaching.

After a jolly luncheon at Pruniers, Lauretta and I put Jay aboard the boat train for Cherbourg, returned to our hotels to pack, and that night we left Paris for Milan.

We took what was called the crack express train, meaning the last word in French travel. We traveled in a compartment car, at one end of which was the toilet, available to men and women. In France it is marked W. C., water closet, I called it "Who Cares!" And for a de luxe convenience during the night, there is a small closet about five feet by three feet between every two compartments. If you enter therein from your compartment, you immediately lock the opposite door, and a sign warns you to unlock that same door, when you leave.

If you have ever been on a Coney Island roller-coaster, whose each new plunge seems to hurl you into eternity, just multiply the sensations of that perilous ride by one thousand and you will have a picture of an express train tearing through the Alps.

Our stay in Milan was short, for strong desire had called us to

the art sanctuaries of Florence. We stayed in a modern hotel on the Arno, I have forgotten the name, and Dante was never happier with his Beatrice than was I, in this medieval paradise. If the art treasures of the Louvre and the Luxembourg enchanted me, Florence completely intoxicated me. If one is a lover of beauty, a first meeting with the works of Cellini, Michelangelo, Raphael, Donatello and a dozen other great masters, is a satiating experience.

Time and again we visited the vast collections in the Pitti and Uffizi Palaces, we could not comprehend it all. Once I read that "an art museum is like an artichoke, it should be enjoyed leaf by leaf."

We were trying to take it that way, but the leaves were so many and so movingly beautiful, that artistic assimilation was difficult and I vowed that I would return again and further absorb the beauty of old Florence. We visited the old churches, in themselves museums, and we were particularly drawn to the Church of Santa Croce and in the handsome square where it stands, there is an imposing statute of Dante. Santa Croce, the Westminster Abbey of Florence, is the shrine of Italian genius. Within its walls are the tombs of Michelangelo, Galileo, and I think Rossini. On every hand, one is confronted with the powerful influence of the Catholic Church. For the painters, sculptors and musicians of early Florence lent their talents to expressing the doctrines and rituals of that church.

When Lauretta and I were tired with sightseeing, we dragged our weary feet to an open café, and while we sipped vermouth and carbonated water, we gazed in renewed wonder at Michelangelo's "David" and Cellini's "Perseus." They were in the lovely square across the street.

Nice women do not walk on the streets of Italy, after dark. So we always arranged to have dinner early and allowed an hour of twilight for a quiet stroll along the banks of the Arno. There was always music in the air, either coming from the little houses, or

on the streets. There was an atmosphere of lazy contentment, the people living slowly and serenely like the tired Arno, which flowed before their doors.

One day, when we were shopping for leather goods, there came dashing through the market, a man whom we both knew, a former accompanist for Miss Geraldine Farrar. We were happy at finding each other and Claude and his Italian friend invited us to dinner at Fiesole. Somewhere in the dim past, I had heard of Fiesole and knew that it was near Florence, but I was hazy as to its particular interest.

The charming Italian who was with us was a gifted linguist and in excellent English he enlightened us on Fiesole. It is now a little village, on a hill about three miles west of Florence and of great historical interest. It was formerly an Etruscan site, before the Roman conquest. A little church marks the place where stood a monastery, famous as the residence of Fra Angelica, the painter-monk. And the names of Scilla, Catiline, Julius Caesar and Belisarius are associated with its past history. To me, Fiesole will always mean nightingales, for it was there that I first heard their heavenly chorus.

The four of us took an open carriage in Florence, and drove up steep old roads, which here and there, were lined in by tall cypress trees. And at the top of the hill was the plateau village of Fiesole, with its few thousand inhabitants. It was early twilight and we wandered through the little streets, stopping at several interesting ruins. Peasants sat at their doorsteps, happy children played in the streets and some gay troubadors were making music on a balcony. Life to these people seemed all in the present, and just another lovely summer's evening.

But we were under the spell of antiquity and Fiesole completely captivated our imaginations. I was back in school again, wading through Roman history and struggling through Caesar, Cicero and

Sallust Catiline. These studies seemed unnecessary drudgery at that time, but on this night I was glad of my little knowledge. It helped me to construct a picture of former days on this old Etruscan plain. We dined at a splendid restaurant and from our table on the balcony we could see the city of Florence below us. As dusk set in, I heard an exquisite sound in the near-by trees, then more sounds of like enchantment and in complete wonder I asked to be enlightened. Our Italian acquaintance told us that they were nightingales and this spot was one of their beloved haunts. Soon there was a chorus of them, and their beautiful plaintive notes, filled the balmy air with the rapture of music. It was something that I had read about, and sung about, and now I was the enthralled listener.

Julien would have to hear these heavenly song birds; perhaps we would skip Paris and come directly to Florence. We could take that adorable little house on the Arno, the one that seems to hang over the river, and has a balcony. And at twilight we could ride up the hill to Fiesole and hear the nightingales. What a romantic inspiration! Julien had never been to Florence and when I saw him in the fall, I would delight his ears with tales of the beauty I had seen and of the singing nightingales at Fiesole. I have never heard a nightingale since that dreamy night in Italy. And if my ears again heard those notes of languishing beauty, I should have to fight off tears—for the things which might have been.

Two days later, Lauretta and I left for Venice and spent four days in that City of the Sea. There is a strange and delicious charm which steals over one, when you step from the railway station. For instead of carriages and taxi cabs, a fleet of boats awaits the passengers. And your first ride in a gondola along the Grand Canal is an unforgettable delight, even for two lone women. Most of the gondoliers sing, ours did, and although no musical sounds came from his tired throat, I found the whole idea charming. On a later trip through the labyrinth of canals, we went with a guide gondo-

lier, and he pointed out the former residences of Byron, Browning, George Sand and Titian. What serene retreats they were and how conducive to creative work must have been these old Venetian dwelling spots.

We took trips to the Lido and spent much time among the art treasures in the Doge's Palace. One late afternoon, when we had spent ourselves with walking through the galleries, we sat down to rest, and the bench we chose faced a beautiful nude by Titian. An American couple whom we had noticed, approached the masterpiece and enacted a little scene. The woman, a frail little body, had a catalogue in her hand. The man, we believed her husband, was fat, florid, pompous and over-dressed. You felt that if you had met him on the street, he would talk to you through a half smoked black cigar. No smoking was allowed in the galleries.

"See Papa," said the woman, "Here is the beautiful Titian I told you about. Is she not beautiful?" "I suppose so," said the lummoX, giving a casual glance at the masterpiece. "But I'm tired of this damn place, we have been here nearly an hour and I'm hungry. Let's get out and get some ham and eggs."

"But you are not in America, dear, you cannot get ham and eggs here."

"I'll bet you I can. These wops will do anything for money. I saw a sign in a little restaurant near the Square. It said 'American food sold here.' Let's get out and try."

And the little woman gave a deep sigh, folded her catalogue and slowly followed her fat-bellied spouse in search of ham and eggs! Shades of Venice, The Doges and Titian, what a desecration it seemed! And when Lauretta and I had properly knifed this man's unesthetic soul, we had to finally agree that after all, it is only a point of view.

The first sight of St. Mark's Cathedral facing the Square, fills one with awe and reverence, for in this palatial shrine to God, the

Venetians have outdone themselves, and the rest of the world, for that matter. We spent hours inside and outside of this noble structure, only to be further imbued with admiration for its artistic supremacy and veneration for the faithful worshipers who had made it possible.

In the evenings, we went over to St. Mark's Square, a fascinating rendezvous for the Venetians and a gay panorama for sightseers. This square, mostly deserted in the heat of the day, takes on a charming gaiety in the evening. There is usually a fine band concert, and to the lovely music, happy people promenade, while the side-walk cafés are thronged with contented onlookers. A soft breeze always comes in from the Adriatic, Time seems to stand still, while old and young Venice casts its ageless spell.

It is easy walking distance to any of the hotels, but when the concerts would come to an end, we usually took a gondola—as we said, there will be plenty of walking ahead for us, on the hard pavements of New York City. While we are in Venice, we shall go Venetian!

We went to Paris for a few days, then sailed on the steamship *Majestic*. We were both travel tired and filled with the wonders of the old world we had just left. We kept to our cabins and deck chairs and the trip was uneventful except for an indiscretion on my part.

There was a handsome Japanese aboard, and when he walked the deck, every eye was trained upon his London tailoring. He had an inexhaustive wardrobe and paraded it beautifully. Many American men on that ship must have groaned in envy at his stunning appearance. We noticed that he often joined Mrs. Vanderbilt's party and for me that marked him as a gentleman of culture and good breeding.

On the night of the captain's dinner dance, he crossed the ball-room and bowing low before me, asked me to dance with him.

For pure devilment I accepted and as he whirled me away, I caught a glimpse of Lauretta's expression—a mixture of amusement and perplexity. He was a glorious dancer and reeked of a heavy oriental perfume. I do not know where he had acquired his virtuosity in Terpsichorean art, but he held a master's degree. He spoke choice English with an Oxford accent, and was returning from that University, where he had just finished a post-graduate course. He was passing through the United States and on his way to Tokio. His arms were like iron bands around my body and I felt as though I was in a vise. I told myself, that if this was any spot other than a public dance floor, he could pull a jujitsu on me and in one instant I would be on the floor. I was happy when the music ceased and I could get to my chair. The sleek Oriental bowed low, and thanked me for the charming dance, which to me had been a bear-hug. I was still panting for breath!

I refused further dances that evening and pleaded *mal de mer*. Lauretta made capital of the thing and declared that unless I paid her hush-money, she would tell Jay. We had a good laugh, and I replied that I would avoid hush-money and make a complete confession, which I did in good time.

Jay had sent a wireless to our ship and said that he was bringing our new boat, "The Adieu" strangely enough, down to Quarantine to meet the Steamship *Majestic*.

Lauretta and I were all on edge and took our places early on the upper deck. We scanned the bay, as our ship dropped anchor, and there below us was Jay with a party of our friends aboard the boat. And from the deck of that huge liner, our boat looked like a toy. Jay called to me through a megaphone, told me who was aboard, and all my friends in turn spoke through the megaphone. It was a sweet homecoming, and after our ship docked, the whole party went to our apartment and held forth, far into the night.

Being full of my recent trip, I tried to tell our little gathering

of the singing nightingales at Fiesole, and of the wonder of Michelangelo's "David." But my narrative was drowned in the familiar airs of "Who is the bartender?" "The barometer says 'Dry.'" "This is the damndest, driest ship I was ever on." And under the influence of prohibition gin, we all got drunk and nothing mattered other than the usual morning hang-over!

The summer of 1927 passed pleasantly enough and in the same routine, long week-ends aboard the boat, short cruises to Montauk for lobster dinners, to New London for the boat races, and to Block Island to watch the sword-fishing, and our return usually took us through the whirlpool waters at Hell Gate. It was great sport for Jay who loved the water and terrifying for me who lived in constant fear of a watery grave!

I did escape that death in a dramatic rescue, in Long Island Sound. It was in early August. Our boat was lying off New London and we had two guests aboard. About six in the evening, the four of us got into our little dingy and headed for the New London Yacht Club for dinner. We had gone but a short distance when a huge yacht crossed our stern and threw a big swell toward us. Jay saw it, tried to maneuver our dingy out of its path, but we had no speed and in terror Jay said, "Here she comes. We are going to be swamped."

Somewhere I had read, that if you do nothing and do not fight there is a chance to be saved from drowning. I put my hand on the side of the dingy, kept calm and in less time than it takes to tell it, I was in the water, still holding to the dingy.

The captain of the yacht realizing his error, brought his boat to a standstill, and our two guests were swimming toward it. Jay was treading water at my side and holding on to the overturned dingy which was about three-fourths under water. The deck hands on the yacht threw out life preservers, and in their excitement for-

got to put ropes on them, so they just sailed away on the seas. Jay came to my side of the dingy, put his arm under me and told me to lie out straight on the water, like I was floating. He kissed me, and while the little ripples of salt water passed over my face, he screamed, yelled and cursed at the captain and ordered him to bring the yacht to our rescue. In a few minutes, which seemed an interminable time, the yacht swung around, our guests were pulled aboard, I was lifted out of the water and Jay climbed on deck. A crowd which had gathered on the New London docks, cheered, as they watched the rescue.

Jay told the captain, and in no uncertain terms, that his action was the poorest exhibition of sportsmanship that he had ever known. The captain shrugged his shoulders and walked away. Helen, our guest and myself were in wet clothes and trembling from head to foot. Jay asked the owner if we might have a drink and a waiter served us with two glasses of ice-water! Helen's hands shook to such a degree that her glass of water crashed to the deck, and I set my glass to one side. "Never mind our dingy," said Jay, "we will pick that up later. But you swing this ship around and take us back to our boat."

The yacht pulled over to "The Adieu," our boat, and to make the transfer from this boat to ours, we had to go below decks. Believe it or not, there was a gay party of men and women in the dining salon. They were intoxicated and there was enough liquor in evidence to have filled our gasoline tank! Yet they had given us ice-water and no woman had come above decks to inquire for our comforts!

Aboard our own boat, Jay poured us each a glass of straight whisky, then broke down and cried like a baby. In the water, he had told me that we could stay up indefinitely but now he confessed that the dingy would have filled in about five minutes, and we both would have been lost.

The yacht was from Philadelphia and when we returned to New York, Jay wrote a letter to the owner denouncing the sea-etiquette of himself, his captain and his guests. We received no reply. This last experience, put the finishing touches on my fear of the water. And today an invitation to join a small boating party, finds me securely tied-up with a previous engagement!

The lazy summer days had spent their beauty and we had crossed into pensive autumn. In September my love urge rose from its hibernation and began the perennial fight with duty. Duty is always plain and certain at a first glance but when one is involved in a paralogism and wishing that things were otherwise than they are, the line of duty becomes indistinct and is easily explained away. Reason, like a bad child, is spanked, put to bed and told to stay there, emotion reigns supreme, and conscience weeps for its unheeded warning.

I telephoned Julien's office, having carefully rehearsed my conversation, only to find that he was still in South America and was not returning until late October.

Time was dragging, boredom was raising its appalling head and for escape, I turned to my music, always a sure safety-valve. I studied with Estelle Liebling, then and now an eminent vocal teacher. Under her guidance and sweet friendship, I regained my technique and together we planned an interesting venture in the musical field. Then came November 16, 1927, and the bottom fell out of my world!

## XIV

NOVEMBER 16, 1927

THE DAY was Wednesday, it dawned clear and crisp and Jay left for the office with his usual good-by kiss. He returned for a moment, to ask if we had any engagement that night. I replied that we were remaining at home and in good company, he was finishing Ludwig's life of Napoleon and I was reading a new study on Chopin's life. He kissed me again and said, "Good-by, baby, I'll be seeing you toute-suite, and the tooter the sweeter!"

I never saw him again, alive, nor dead, and for my "Souvenir" I have his love, his last smile and his message.

And it is with super-human effort that I shall try to chronicle the high spots of that awful day, and the many days that followed.

I had a luncheon and matinee date with Laretta and at twelve-thirty I went down to my lovely Renault town-car, which Jay had bought me—he drove a Cadillac. Our chauffeur, a stocky young Italian named Leo, seemed nervous and lacked the usual warmth in his morning greeting.

Jay's warehouse was on the West Side of 60th Street and I instructed Leo to go down Riverside Drive, pass the warehouse and then turn east for my appointment. Leo balked and said that he did not want to drive that way, but would take me through the park. I repeated my instructions and he slowed the car again saying that he would go the other way. Amazed at what sounded like impertinence, I said, "Leo, why do you not want to take me down the west side."

"Because," he answered, "there is a fire at the warehouse."

My heart almost turned over and I said to him,

"You drive me there at once and as fast as you can. If Jay is in trouble my place is at his side."

Leo mumbled and kept the car at a snail's pace. I flew into a rage, told him to stop the car and I would take a taxi. The poor chap apologized, put on speed and I sat back, sick with worry and fear. I told myself that nothing counted now but Jay's safety. If we lost everything, we would start again at scratch, we had done it before and could do it again.

When we reached 72nd Street, I could see black clouds of smoke in the air and when we got to the warehouse, fire lines had been thrown about and we could not pass. We parked the car and with Leo's help we pushed through the crowds to a traffic policeman. When he was convinced that I was Jay's wife, he let us pass through and leaning on Leo's arm, for I was faint, I watched Jay's life work go up in flames. There was no sight of him about and I called to two of his employees who seemed to be dodging me. I inquired as to Jay's whereabouts, they did not know, and walked away. I called another workman, and he was loathe to answer my question, "Where is Mr. Mellish, where did he go, haven't any of you seen him?" This man said that someone had seen Mr. Mellish run back into the warehouse, but he could not vouch for the truth of that statement.

"But," I said to Leo, "he could not be in there, look at that smoke, he would be suffocated." Poor Leo made no reply, but when he looked at me I saw there were tears in his eyes.

Curious bystanders pointed at me and said, "That is the boss's wife, do you think they told her?"

Shrieking fire engines came tearing down the streets, it was a general alarm, and streams of water poured upon the flaming mass. Suddenly my legs began to give way and I grabbed Leo for support. I asked him to take me home and he almost carried me to

our waiting car. I was nauseous, and dizzy. My hands and feet were ice-cold and my heart was pounding. But hope was strong, perhaps Jay was at home, or maybe he had run away from the awful conflagration and was with friends.

Arriving at my apartment at two o'clock I dismissed Leo, told him to return to the warehouse and telephone me every fifteen minutes.

It was maid's day out, and I was alone and very nervous. I called up a friend Helen, she of the boat accident, but she was just leaving to make a radio broadcast and could not come to me. I called Betty, the fiancée of my doctor, and she arrived about three o'clock, bringing a box of bromides—new comfort for me. Betty is calm, well-adjusted and kind and she talked in her sane way and tried to allay any fears which kept creeping in.

After considerable coaxing, I agreed to swallow a bromide, I had had nothing but coffee, since early morning and was afraid that I might sleep. But Betty assured me that the little wafer would induce calm but not sleep.

Leo telephoned at regular intervals but there was no news. At five o'clock my doctor came, and then followed Rose bringing boxes of sandwiches, hot coffee and liquor. Some friends arrived from Long Island, bringing more food and liquor. It all seemed strange to me but of course I did not know that the newspapers were selling extras and everyone knew, what I had not dared to think.

Dr. Timm telephoned Jay's mother and the dear soul came down from Peekskill. I assured her that all would be well, but she sank to her knees at Jay's empty bed and prayed through her sobs that God might spare her only son.

The doctor also called Albany, my sister Nan caught the sleeper and was at my apartment at five o'clock the next morning. Of the two days that followed, I remember little, I neither ate nor drank and moved about like a walking corpse.

My friends kept vigil with me night and day, the telephone was ringing constantly to say that Jay's body had not been found. That was still good news to me, for I hoped that maybe he was in a daze and had wandered away and would be found in some hospital.

Early Saturday morning I went to my desk to search for some important business papers and there fell to the floor, the printed copy of "Souvenir." My heart froze as I looked at it, and in a few minutes I was called to the telephone—Jay's body had been found.

The Metropolitan Opera Company, through Mr. Ziegler, sent me a telegram offering any kind of help, in fact the wire said "Command me." It was two years since I had been a member in their ranks, and you may believe that I was deeply touched.

My concert manager Mr. Haensel offered a string quartet, for the funeral services and if I so desired, our friend Richard Crooks would sing. But I stipulated that there must be *no music*, that would break me.

After the funeral, I lapsed into a lethargy. All my bridges had been burned, there were no new ones on the horizon and nothing mattered. I was crushed in heart, mind and body. My speaking voice, formerly a high-pitched resonant one, sounded like that of a plaintive child, and was scarcely audible over the telephone. My handwriting became illegible and I moved about like a puppet. For days I lived on bromides, orange juice and black coffee. And what was called sleep, was just a succession of hideous nightmares. So much of me had gone with Jay, that I had nothing left to build upon, the past only was real, the present unreal and there just was no future. For the first time I knew the full import of Emerson's words when he said, "To love is to be acquainted with sorrow."

I was due for a collapse but I did not have time to indulge in one. Jay's business friends begged me to hold on. The warehouse

would be rebuilt in a short time and the tremendous business which Jay had attracted would still come to our doors. Nan's husband relinquished his business in Albany and came down to supervise the wreck and help me pull the threads together. Through weary heart-breaking days I signed contracts, rummaged among old papers and accounts, and attended business meetings.

Jay was forty at his death. His mother, whom I adored, his father and the grandmother, nearing eighty, were still living and needed my care, I must put my shoulder to the wheel and carry on, at least until I could place them in the way of an income.

My doctor and friends were worried because I had no weeping fits. As a matter of fact I longed to cry, but could not. Violent sobs would shake my body and I lived in an agony of grief, but I seemed frozen within and no tears came to my release.

Not before, nor since, nor in any future time to come, has it been given to anyone, to know more fully of friendship. If ever I had cast one piece of bread upon the waters, it had become like the miracle of the loaves and fishes, for it returned to me one thousand fold. Marie, Marion, Rose, Florence, Laretta and Mary K., with love and devotion built a Maginot Line for my defense, and they stood behind me twenty-four hours of every day. To their loving kindness I owe my sanity, for there were times, in that first year, when I verged on mental derangement.

About ten days before that Christmas, I went into a melancholia, the approaching holidays were crushing me. Jay and I had spent eighteen Christmas days together, and always in Albany, where Christmas had been a beautiful occasion.

I kept to my apartment, for the streets filled with happy holiday shoppers, the festive department stores and the general gaiety of the Christmas spirit only further accentuated my own desolation.

My friend, Marie, packed my bags and took me to Albany, where I went to bed for two weeks and rested under the loving ministra-

tions of my mother. I vowed that I would never return to our apartment, from which windows I had looked out upon the Hudson River, the Columbia Yacht Club and well-known crafts at anchor,—never again would “The Adieu” and her happy owner join that fleet.

And during my absence in Albany, Rose and Mary K. worked like slaves to put me in a new setting. They found an unfurnished suite in an apartment hotel. Some of my furniture went to storage, my piano, books and necessary livable furniture was packed in the new abode, which I was to call home. And in January, 1928, I took up my residence in this apartment hotel and began the ordeal of living alone.

And what of Julien, in this upheaval! The dear fellow had worn out the telephone wires to Rose and Marion, in search of news, and with every known offer to help. I had not given him a thought, I was sunk with the sorrow of my loss, conscience rose up to chide me, business worries distracted me, and the very thought of a romance or love-affair was revolting.

I had no resentment about Jay's death, there was always before me the picture of thirty thousand white crosses, in a field in France, and the memory of forty thousand unidentified in the vault at Douaumont. Fathers, sons, sweethearts, husbands and brothers had been taken from their women folks, and now, it was just my turn. But I was pitifully lonely and with no life-companion, no children, no music, no real interest, the urge to live was on the wane.

Spring came again, but oh, how different from other years, for spring was dressed in mourning and brought to me only the pain of memory. And how would I face spring and worse still how could I go through the summer alone and in a New York hotel—the thought of it was demoralizing and I was losing my grip.

The ever-faithful Rose took the situation in hand and suggested a trip to Europe. We would go to England, and make no further

plan, but drift to other lands as we felt the call. Perhaps travel would provide a nepenthic cure for my fast-breaking nervous system.

I agreed to this plan with eager gratitude, so glad I was, to run away from old scenes. I knew that I would carry my grief with me, but at least, I would not meet at every turn of the eye, some ghastly reminder of happy days that had been.

When our arrangements were final and our tickets purchased, I telephoned Julien and asked him to meet me at Rose's apartment. I was not afraid to be alone with him, for I felt impervious to his charm. But I stupidly wanted to be circumspect and recoiled at the idea of receiving him at my own hotel. At Rose's apartment there was a cozy fire, more lovely flowers in artistic profusion and her home offered the same hospitality.

Julien arrived about eight-thirty and a world of love and tenderness was in his firm handclasp. He was visibly shocked at my appearance, I was dressed in mourning and had lost fifteen pounds. We sat by the fire but felt none of its warmth for Jay's ghost sat with us, and we both sensed its presence. Our conversation ran in casual and safe channels, neither of us made even a feeble effort to pick up the scattered love-threads. For tragedy had added a new design to my pattern of life, sorrow was still crushing me and only time could soften my anguish.

Julien's sympathetic concern for my future was sweet, and I appreciated his offer to help. But my only need now was for peace, and I must find that through my own inner resources.

Our good-by was a strange one and if "Parting is such sweet sorrow," I have had my fill of it, and for me, you can strike out the word *sweet*.

When I gave my hand to Julien, he raised it to his lips and kissed it in his own chivalrous manner, then his grief released itself, and he broke into uncontrollable sobs. "Darling," he said, "do

not try to tell me anything, because I know all, I have felt it for some time. You never loved anyone but Jay. You love his dead memory more than you could ever care for me, and it is breaking my heart. I do not know what I shall do this summer, but wherever I am, I shall be waiting for you. Maybe time will work a miracle and we can yet spend our lives together. A message to my office will always reach me, and if I am in Europe, a cable will bring me to your side. Forgive my weakness in crying, but I have suffered so much for you and with you, that it feels good to cry.

As for myself, broken in body and in spirit, I was insensible to the tragic tensivity of the moment. I had grown callous to the suffering of others and was living in and for my own grief.

I loved Julien, but like happiness and romance, he seemed to belong to some far distant past. I could not pull him into the present. There was no future on my horizon, I lived only from day to day, so I dumbly accepted his statement of facts—nothing mattered now.

We parted without further emotion, but Julien's tenderness had unlocked the flood-gates and when I was alone, the blessed tears of release began to flow and I cried myself into hysteria. I spent the night with Rose, who comforted herself by saying over and over again, "Thank God that you are able to cry."

Rose and I sailed for London, and planned to spend two weeks there but the abominable and depressing weather and the English food nearly killed me. We went sight-seeing in rain and fog, returning always to our chilly hotel rooms. The cold mutton joints, beef and kidney pies, strong tea and soggy puddings worked havoc with my lazy intestine. I have never tasted varnish, but the Martini cocktail of those London days, tasted like a mixture of varnish and vinegar, with the inevitable dash of bitters.

We drank Scotch and soda, but try and get ice with that drink! The waiter looked askance at such a request, and muttering "Ameri-

cans" under his breath, he returned with two bits of ice resposing at the bottom of a huge ornate silver bowl. And the very sound of the ice in our glasses caused our English friends to shiver.

The jolly old London of book days was a flop, so far as I was concerned, and we cut our visit to a week's stay and left for the English countryside.

We rented a comfortable limousine car with chauffeur and our little tour included Warwick Castle, Kenilworth, Stratford-on-Avon, Bath and the old churchyard at Stoke Poges, to which Gray's "Elegy" has given lasting charm.

Anne Hathaway's cottage draws exclamations of delight from the travelers. It is a dream come true, and almost unreal in its quaint beauty, like a page from your old story book, which has come to life. And the old thatched roof, the deep set hedges and the profusion of flowers have retained the rustic beauty with which this whole countryside is replete.

I approached Kenilworth Castle with the feeling that I had been there before. The book had made an early and profound impression and I have lived and suffered with Amy Robsart, Leicester and the tyrannical Elizabeth. Amy Robsart may have been a fictional character, but to me she had always been real and in my girlhood years I had wept for her tragic death—and how I hated the Protestant Queen Elizabeth!

The castle was in ruins, but few of the towers standing intact, and the old walls seemed to groan under the heavy ivy which covered them. A one-armed war veteran was acting as a guide and for once a guide loved his subject and relished his job. He was a beautifully educated man, and wore at least a dozen citations for bravery in the last war. His job was to admit tourists to the grounds, for which he collected a small fee. But my lively interest in Kenilworth drew him out and he browsed around with us, pointing out the once glorious banquet hall, and the famous staircase where the

ill-fated Amy plunged to her death. The sun was setting and threw a warm glow over the silent turrets. What gaiety had once re-echoed within these ruins and now only our quiet footfalls and the cry of greedy birds disturbed the lovely spell.

With the old guide's permission, I picked a few leaves of silver holly, and I sent some to Nan, in Albany. She and I had read Kenilworth together, and I just had to pass on this sweet link with the past. Rural England in the spring was more than ample compensation for the dreary London days, and I loved every minute of the short week we spent on tour. The picturesque country lanes, rose-covered cottages, and the quaint old inns of Dickens' description have a quiet charm which is only England's. And miles and miles of well-groomed landscape, undefiled by startling advertisements, are a source of joy to the wandering American. We returned to London, to more rain, fog and dreary days and when Rose suggested that we cross over to Ireland I was duly excited at the thought of seeing the Emerald Isle.

We made the crossing on a dull day, a fine salty mist was in the air and the Irish Sea churned and heaved to the belching distress of many passengers. I being on the well list, kept to my deck chair, indulged in a briny soliloquy and tried to envisage this Ireland of my forebears.

My father's discourses on his native land were never given in moderation, I have seen him on the verge of tears, when with passionate anger, he spoke of England's crushing heel. He told me of the Irish Kings, of beautiful abbeys and famous monasteries, of poor land tenants, who paid taxes to the owner and the Crown, and were never allowed to buy the land on which they worked. English competition had willfully killed Ireland's commerce and Protestant rulers had tried to dominate a country whose inhabitants were mostly Catholics. These and many like stories, left my feeling for Ireland more of pity than of love.

But my maternal grandfather, gay blade that he was, had filled my childhood hours with the melodies of Tom Moore and utterly charming stories of the fairies which he promised were real. He said that these lovely sprites played all kinds of pranks, and never appeared by daylight. Mortal eyes could never see the fairies, but on a summer's night, if you sat very still, you could hear them singing, as the wind carried the lovely melodies across the bog. The bad fairies would steal at night into a peasant's barn, milk all the cows, and morning saw the cows standing there with dry udders. It was no use to curse the fairies, because if you did they would return and bring some worse calamity upon you. I asked my grandfather for real proof of their existence and he said it was very simple. When there was no dew on the morning grass, the fairies had been there during the night, for dew was their favorite drink. And if the grass was heavy with dew, they had not come out that night. That seemed so logical to my ten year mind and I accepted the proof without question. Grandfather lived near the river Shannon and he said that on moonlight nights, the fairies lurked behind the hills and you could hear them cavorting. When the moon went down and folks went to bed, they tripped out to the river and were known to sail boats, which had been at anchor.

But alas and alack, for the days when I believed!

And lost in reverie, still trying to conjure up a picture of old Ireland, I saw the green landscape on the horizon and we soon steamed into the lovely harbor at Kingstown. A short railway journey took us to Dublin, where we engaged rooms at the Shelbourne Hotel. We were assigned to a huge bedroom, and when I say huge, that room was surely over twenty-five foot square and the bathroom which adjoined it, was about half as big as the bedroom.

It was cold and damp, and the heating facilities for these rooms was a small grate-fire which lurked under an imposing mantel-

piece. I rang for coal, and a healthy buxom Irish girl brought in a beautiful brass scuttle which contained about eight lumps of coal. When I stood near the fire, my hands and feet thawed into life, but if I crossed to the other side of the room, I felt a chill. For three days, the maid dragged scuttles of coal. She always reminded us that it cost a shilling and I know that she thought we were anemic in body and erratic in mind.

That night we went to see the Abbey Players, and those clever actors gave me my first good laugh in many months. Their hilarious comedy simply convulsed me. We took a ride in a jaunting car, hung on through perilous turns on the road, and voted it unromantic. But if one has a lazy liver, a jaunt in one of these low-backed cars will hasten one's bile into proper channels.

Dublin, especially Sackville Street, was disappointing, in its quick modern pace. I had pictured a slow moving quaint old town, but the big electric trams, well-ventilated omnibuses and general commercial activity made it just another city. The slums were as bad as London's worst, the Irish men tall and handsome, the important buildings in fine taste and Trinity College was a revelation.

Founded by Queen Elizabeth, this Irish university boasts of priceless literary treasures. Beside the college gate, stands the statue of Oliver Goldsmith. "Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain," is supposed to have been a little town on the river Shannon. The poet lived there with his poor clergyman father and has immortalized that father in "The Vicar of Wakefield."

In the library of Dublin's University, are precious books, rare manuscripts and interesting relics. I spent hours, with a magnifying glass in hand, reveling with wonder at the illuminated parchments. The colorings are still vivid, and the artistic skill which has gone into the delicate tracery of the patterns, could only be a labor of love and piety.

And in this somber library is a seventh century copy of the Four

Gospels. These Gospels were copied by monks, in a monastery in the village of Kells and the book is called "Book of Kells." It is admittedly the most beautiful book in the world. On some pages, every sentence begins with a decorated letter, each letter different from the others and the superb colorings on the page give the effect of a gold plate studded with jewels. In the seventh century, writings of any kind were rare, printing was centuries ahead and one can only look with reverence at the exquisite scriptic art of these pages. If Ireland had no other souvenir of past glory, this book alone testifies to the days when all Christendom flocked to Irish shores, in search of learning and inspiration.

Ireland is rebellious in character and resents England's domination, but centuries of intolerance have contributed to make for this unhappy state. And the story of Trinity College, told to me by an irate Irishman, is one more evidence of England's heel. Trinity College was founded in 1591 and for two hundred years, two centuries I like to call it, no Roman Catholic was allowed to take a degree there. And for nearly a century later, Roman Catholics were deprived of all privileges and students' endowments, readily given to Protestants. And this, in Ireland, which had preserved Christendom in a pagan world! Religious intolerance and bigotry have caused wars among nations and wrought havoc in private lives and Hitler's present stand against Jews and Catholics is just one more link in the chain of persecutions.

We returned to London, well pleased with our short visit to Ireland and left immediately for the continent. If that summer has left no strong outline in my memory, it is because I was apathetic and had lost live interest in people, places, and things. My bubbling enthusiasm had given place to the dull routine of marking time.

We then visited some sweet spots in the South of France, went to smart watering places and later departed for Italy.

But I was wearing the smoke-gray glasses of a deep sorrow and

I saw life only through their dull lenses. Periods of adjustment are always more or less nerve-racking and the uncertainty of how one will come through, is a devitalizing ordeal. Sleep was elusive, but I struggled on with frequent doses of sleeping medicine, which I had brought with me from New York. And when in late August we arrived in Paris and booked a return sailing, I was relieved. It would be good to be going to America, even if I had no home,—for the hotel rooms could never be home to me. My loving relations and friends were standing by, Jay's mother needed me, there was business to be attended to and Julien was waiting for me. Perhaps I could find some strong threads upon which to weave a new pattern for the future—in any case, I must try.

On the afternoon before we sailed, I went out to do some last minute shopping. It was a glorious summer day, the boulevards were crowded and I walked leisurely past some of my favorite haunts and whispered little "Good-bys" to the Rue de la Paix, the Place Vendôme and the Tuileries—how I loved them all. Paris is the Vampire City for me and her streets play a big role in capturing the fancy of a romanticist.

The flower markets at the Madeleine, the old wine carts rumbling along, the artichoke vendor, a drunken cabby enjoying his afternoon nap, the busy concierge, the boats on the Seine and the eternal lovers arm in arm, are inconsequential in themselves. But viewed as a panorama, they make for a carefree atmosphere and seductively beckon to the day-dreamer.

Our hotel was directly opposite the Louvre and I felt a strange desire to stop in and see "Souvenir." But I dismissed the idea, as a sadistic impulse, I turned my back on the tragic marble and entered our rooms.

Rose was lying on the bed, face down, and in her hand she held a copy of the Paris-Herald. She turned at my step and I saw that she had been crying. I hastened to her side saying, "What is it, Rose,

what has happened?" She pushed the paper toward me and between little sobs, said, "It's too terrible, it never should have happened. I had hoped and prayed that things would be otherwise." Then rising from the bed, Rose put her hands on my shoulders and with loving tenderness, said, "Mary, we all know how brave you have been and how deeply you have suffered. But life wants to add a little more to your cup of bitterness. There is bad news about Julien!"

"Has he been killed in an accident?" I asked.

"No," answered Rose, "sit down and read for yourself."

The notice was from New York City to the effect that one Mr. Julien X had died in Florence, Italy. He had been ill but a few days with pneumonia and the body had been brought to New York for burial. The newspaper slid to the floor, and I looked out over the Tuileries Garden, into space. No emotion seemed to stir within me, a mental paralysis set in and my body felt numb. Rose watched me with tremulous solicitation and in a few minutes she said, "Maybe I better ring for a glass of whisky, will you take it?"

"No," I said, "order a bottle of champagne and let us have dinner in our rooms. I can't go out, I am not equal to the streets of Paris, I never want to see them again!"

Of course that dinner was funereal in character and I wanted to feel deeply for Julien, but somehow Jay's untimely death had robbed me of all capacity for further suffering. I was cold as the marble in "Souvenir" and equally resigned. There was no small ray of hope to light my inner lamp—I was burned out. As I tossed in my bed that night, I tried to shut out the familiar noises of the Paris Streets. I found myself hating my once beloved Paris, and planning only to escape from its poignant memories.

We sailed for America the next day and as I stared for hours at the summer sea, the loneliness of the future induced suicidal thoughts. It would be so easy to slide over the rail of the ship and

slip into watery oblivion. And in this morbid reverie, there came to me out of the dim past, the lines of a beautiful French song, which had been in my repertoire.

The song was called "Au Cimetière" (At the Cemetery), and was written by Gabrielle Fauré.

To a few simple expressive chords, the first lines begin:

"Heureux qui meurt ici,  
Ainsi que les oiseaux des champs."

And a free translation runs like this,

"Happy the one who died here,  
Like the birds of the field  
His body near his friends,  
In the grass and hearing the  
    songs of other birds,  
He sleeps a good sleep  
Under a radiant sky  
And his bones rest under flowers,  
Which have been sweetly mixed  
    with tears.  
All those who knew him come  
And make their long adieux,  
At his cross, the parents may  
    kneel and weep,  
And those who pass may read  
    if he was young or not  
And with true regret,  
Call him by name."

The quiet accompaniment changes and the music becomes declamatory, weird and melancholy.

The song continues—

"How many unfortunate ones have died at sea,  
They lie under deep waves,  
Far away from their beloved country.  
O the unhappy thought!  
They have green sea-weed for a winding sheet,  
They lie there unknown, all nude,  
With their eyes wide open!"

And again the music changes to the quiet restful note of the cemetery and the song continues

“Heureux qui meurt ici  
Ainsi que les oiseaux des champs.”

This song was necessarily for sensitive and discriminating ears, and I had used it as a study, more than for concert programs. But on the few occasions when I had sung for Julien, he had always requested it. Sorrow snatches at such little things, in search of comfort. And the words of the lovely song, brought bits of consolation and the thought that a cemetery is not such a desolate resting place. My two loves were there, and I must wait until the call came to join them.

## XV

### *FLIGHT FROM GRIEF*

WHEN I arrived at my New York hotel home the fear of loneliness again began to grip me. I looked from my windows at gray stone buildings, roof-tops which flaunted family washings and, beyond, a small patch of sky. Dear God, I said to myself, I must get away from these rooms or go mad. If I could only see a tree, or a patch of grass, or children playing in the snow, anything to break the prison-like monotony of my present abode. And with the help of my solicitous and co-operative friends I found a pleasant locale on upper Fifth Avenue. It was again, an apartment hotel but the rooms were spacious and looked out over Central Park. In this agreeable setting I made a brave effort to face the second and most difficult year of widowhood.

New York City offers much in autumn and winter, but one has to be in a receptive mood. Music, my natural solace, was still denied me. I was emotionally unstable and dare not risk a set-back. My piano had not been opened. I had disposed of the radio and victrola. I had attended two concerts and left in tears, before the end of the program. Recuperation from sorrow is slow and the invalided heart must be gently stimulated, if it is ever to compensate.

I felt that I had to have a real interest and an outlet, and after casting about for a few weeks, I was able to affiliate myself with Bellevue Hospital. I enlisted as a volunteer worker in the Free Clinic for Babies. I reported two afternoons a week and worked under orders from the registered nurses. During the months that I worked there, I came into contact with such misery and poverty that

I found myself counting my own blessings. And in helping less fortunate ones, I escaped from self-pity and made prayers of gratitude. The mothers who brought the babies to the clinic were mostly poor, undernourished and over-worked. They were a drab struggling section of humanity. If there is anything sweeter than a clean, healthy, chubby baby, I do not know what it is. And the babies who were suffering from mal-nutrition literally frightened me. They looked like cold storage squabs and I was terrified to handle them. The skin was tightly stretched over their little skeletons and their staring hungry eyes, which never smiled, would break your heart. These babies were weighed every week, their formulas checked and changed as the case needed. It was marvelous to see some of them pick up, the little bodies round out and the infants begin to crow and smile and look human.

Nine out of ten mothers obeyed every instruction and with infinite devotion, dragged themselves to the clinic, in all kinds of weather. And their joy at seeing the baby's progress was touchingly beautiful—mother love at its best.

But the tenth mother, and there always was one, had no interest in her offspring. She resented the clinic, the doctors and the nurses. She would skip visits, sometimes for three weeks, while the child pined away. She was usually a drunkard or a good for nothing lazy slut. After severe threats from the doctor to the effect that the child would be taken from her, she would resume the visits, but neglect the child at home.

There were many cases of skin disease, due to lack of bathing or general uncleanness. The bodies of these infants were covered with sores or eczema. Nurses passed out regulations for bathing and salves, ointments, or lotions, were given for home use. Wonderful cures followed and happy mothers were discharged with healthy babies. In the older children there were bad tonsils, adenoids, sore eyes, running ears and deformities to cope with. And I have not

words enough to praise the noble efforts of these clinic workers. At Christmas time, we had a big tree, a Santa Claus, a magician and a present for every youngster. I begged some money from friends and baskets of food were sent out for Christmas dinners. I had shopped in wholesale departments for toys, candy and canned goods. And I found the merchants generous and most anxious to help.

The Christmas festivities were held on the afternoon of Christmas Eve. I had taken my suitcase with me, and when the last happy child departed, I hurried to the Grand Central Station and took a train to Albany, where I remained until the holidays had passed.

The winter of 1929 dragged into another Spring, and from my windows, I saw the slow magic of green grass and bursting buds in Central Park. April in Paris, April in New York, or April in Alaska, it was all the same now, for I realized that April had to be in one's heart, the geography of the place had little to do with it.

The lonely widow is perfect prey for the philandering male, and I was no exception. Beaux began to appear at all turns of the road and in my several years of widowhood I learned much about men. There were young men who would have married me for a comfortable home and the ease of cuddling in my motherly arms. And there were young men who were willing to exchange youth, good looks and virility for financial help; the gigolo type—and it is nice work if you can get it!

There were old birds with money, who offered marriage, money and rheumatism. One gay cock-o'-the-walk, who was then about sixty, offered social position, marriage and bad debts. He was a fast worker, had been married three times, and was speeding up his bones for a fourth adventure. All he needed was a beret and a raccoon coat; he cavorted like a Yale freshman. He finally landed in the lap of a frowsy, wealthy widow, and his name appears among

the socialites who follow the seasons to Hot Springs, Palm Beach and Southampton.

Then there is the married man who grazes in strange pastures and is looking for a new mistress. His story has little variation; you are the ideal for whom he has been searching, everything about you has appeal and in dreams, he always wanted to meet someone just like you. His wife misunderstands him, they have nothing in common—other than four children. Or she is frigid, or incapacitated, it is always her fault. He loves you very much and if you could care for him, there is an intimation that you will receive compensation in jewelry, house-rent, roses, or a box of salted nuts, depending upon the generosity and financial status of the said Lothario. Steeped in conceit, he wants to deliver you from the Stygian loneliness of widowhood and at the same time find an outlet for his fast-ebbing sex impulse.

And there is the widower, whose late lamented has left him with three small children. The man needs a housekeeper and the children a nurse, so by a smart maneuver he offers himself in marriage. Bed and board go with the honorable offer and in exchange the new wife takes on the thankless obligation of nursing another woman's children through measles, chicken-pox and whooping cough.

The average widow, if she has a little income and is not too hard on the eyes, will admit of similar propositions. In my case, my sense of humor helped and my discernment of men ripened. Although at that time I never again expected to enter a matrimonial alliance, I knew that I would not be caught on a re-bound. Only the strong pull of a great love could ever snare me into double harness.

Among my real friends, was a New York doctor. He was a bachelor, at the top in his profession and affiliated with important hospitals. But his avocation was music, and he was a pianist of no mean

ability. Every summer, until the depression knocked us all for a loop, Dr. M. used to take a house in Italy. Thither he would bring a younger brother, a married brother and family, and a sister who acted as hostess and housekeeper. He entertained lavishly and his Italian villa was the Mecca for interesting bon vivants. Jay, Rose and I had visited him when we were at Lake Como, and were loathe to leave his charming hospitality.

In May of 1929 Dr. M. announced that he had taken a larger villa for that summer. It was on Lake Como, a few hundred feet from the lovely Villa d'Este. His married brother would not be able to get away and if Laretta and I would consider it, he would love to have us spend the summer months with him in Italy.

You may imagine that this thought was like manna from Heaven to me, and another escape from a lonely summer in New York. Laretta and I accepted with the proviso that we pay our board. And mostly to make us comfortable, Dr. M. accepted a weekly stipend, not even commensurate with the food we ate. As for Dr. M's wine bill, it was enormous, and he allowed that he would have to carve up many kidneys the following winter, in order to augment his bank balance.

Laretta and I took passage on the *Leviathan* for that crossing, and three days out I had a wireless from Marion and Elmer. They had been married in New York, were leaving for a honeymoon in Spain and would see me during the summer. I was terribly happy for them both, and only hoped that Elmer's wealth would not curb Marion's ambition. Her voice and art had ripened in mature beauty and she was singing first roles at the Metropolitan Opera.

The villa at Lake Como was a lovely one, with a huge reception room, and the doctor had sent to Milan for two grand pianos which were installed in opposite corners of the room. Life there was Bohemia at its best, and in the carefree happy atmosphere I had little time for a lapse into grief. Melancholia had no place in that

entourage, in fact if I verged on it, some cheerful soul was there to rescue me. Breakfast was at any time you wanted it, the Italian servants were anxious and willing to please, for their salaries in lire were fantastically high—in our money unimportant. Luncheon was served in a small dining room, en famille and in bathing suits, if it so pleased you.

Dinner, at eight, was formal and served on the big terrace which overlooked Lake Como. We dined by candlelight and watched the new moon grow into a full moon as she hung in the sapphire skies. The dinners were epic poems, for the gourmet, and we lingered for hours under the soft Italian skies, hearing now and then the gentle ripple of the waters as they danced against the balcony steps. At times it all seemed unreal, so beautiful it was and I found myself able to listen to the two-piano music, which always followed dinner. I was coaxed into singing again and strangely enough my *pièce de resistance*, was the simple song from *Show Boat*—"Just My Bill." I did not know that I was waxing prophetic when I sang of "Bill," for years elapsed before I met him!

Among the doctor's guests that season were Mary Boland, Beatrice Lillie, Clifton Webb and Sammy Walsh. And each of these high-lights contributed his or her charming talent, and made for many memorable nights at Lake Como.

At the end of June, Marion and Elmer came to Lake Como and stayed at the Villa d'Este. When they asked me to join them in a week's motoring trip through Italy and return with them on the *Vulcania*, I knew how Rose felt, when Jay and I had included her in our little trip through France. Lauretta was going to the South of France with some artist friends. I could have trailed along, but welcomed the opportunity to join Marion and Elmer.

We left Lake Como in a luxurious limousine car, and I had ample time to really see the Italian countryside and sweet peasant life, as we rolled along.

I am no prophet, nor do I propose to forecast as an historian. I do offer an opinion to the effect that Hitler's destruction of religious freedom in Germany, will always be Germany's loss. But Mussolini and all the dictators who may follow him, will never kill Catholicity in Italy. For the Italian people live with their faith; it is not like the Sunday best dress which hangs in a closet the other six days in the week. There are crosses and shrines at every turn in the road. Streets, villages and even stores are named for saints. On a favorite saint's day, work stops in the town, a fiesta is in full swing and religious processions wind their way among devout believers. The churches and museums of Italy have within their walls the great treasures of the past. And these masterpieces wrought in love and reverence, found their inspiration in Catholic dogma.

The Italian people, who are centuries conscious of their faith, will not readily discard their beliefs—twenty centuries is too long a time. The lure of antiquity is always with us and we search every corner of the universe in quest of old rugs, old lace, old porcelains, old wines, old furniture, old manuscripts, old tapestries and other true links with the past.

I offer no comment on Martin Luther, Mary Eddy nor Father Divine who point more recent routes to salvation. But the Catholic Church, which for fifteen centuries was the only spiritual guide for Christians, will always be steeped in the fascination of the old and the true.

Marion and Elmer were non-Catholic and I do not know which of us was most profoundly moved when we saw Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper." It was on the wall of an old monastery, outside of Milan. In consideration of time, the eloquent painting was in good state of preservation and evoked feelings of awe and admiration for the genius and untiring labor of the artist.

When we sat in the old wooden stalls, on the sides of the chapel

and walked through the cloister into the restful gardens, I did experience a proud and pious re-action. For the faith of my fathers had given this noble painting to a Christian world.

We stopped at Naples, lunched at a charming restaurant which was perched on a cliff overlooking the Bay. One is told to "See Naples and Die." "Smell Naples and Die," I subsequently added to that thought. The little streets and alleys of Naples and the vendors' display of merchandise make a colorful picture, but the stench which emanates from the close-living quarters is an indignity to any nose.

To see Naples from the Bay, or to see the Bay from Naples, is a dreamy wish come true. And old Vesuvius smoldering in the distance beckons you to reconnoiter and condone her peaceful behavior. But you know that Pompeii is not far distant, and that when Vesuvius pours out rivers of molten lava, her destruction is merciless.

Marion and I made a trip to Pompeii, Elmer remaining in Naples to negotiate important business. Pompeii pulls you out of the present, carries you back nearly two thousand years, and stays with you forever. As we walked along the desolate streets where gaiety had once reigned, I could only say "Impossible that these solitary ruins are real, and that I am here."

Workingmen were still excavating, and from the ashen burial ground they had taken new evidences of Pompeian grandeur. The spacious houses, all boasted of a once beautiful courtyard and graceful columns in Pompeian "red" stood in mute defiance to that awful deluge from Vesuvius.

On the walls of the houses were dainty murals, frescoes which told mythological tales, and the floors were laid in mosaic. We saw, among the ruins, a wine shop with the wine jugs on the table, petrified loaves of bread in a bakery shop and musical instruments on a bench, so natural in their places, that no guide need tell one how quickly the lava had rolled into Pompeii.

And the ageless profession of prostitution had evidently reached a high artistic level in old Pompeii. The Pompeian libertines must have insisted that beauty reign with harlotry, for former houses of prostitution, still standing, were some of the most beautiful among the ruins. On the walls of these sumptuous brothels were pictures, obscene to the point of disgust, but admirable for their exquisite workmanship in mosaic. There were luxurious indoor bathing pools and beautiful murals again inspired by obscenity.

We saw a Court of Justice, The Forum and a huge amphitheater, where gladiators had once contended for supremacy. It is difficult to realize that some of these buildings were standing before the coming of Christ and one can only gasp in wonder at the work of excavation, which lifted the shroud of ashes, mud and pumice stone.

Of Rome I can only write with sadness for the things I missed there. All my life I had wanted to really live for a time in the Eternal City and our hurried itinerary only allowed thirty-six hours! We barely peeked at the old Tiber, made a quick visit to the Colosseum and reserved an afternoon for St. Peter's and the Vatican.

Elmer was able to obtain admission to an audience given by the Pope, and the hour was one-thirty. At twelve-thirty we found a little restaurant in St. Peter's Square, and took luncheon there. When the usual platter of spaghetti was served, I suggested a glass of beer. Elmer, with his sense of the fitness of things, thought it indelicate to call upon the Pope with even a slight breath of alcohol. I argued that His Holiness was an Italian and if I knew Italians, he had a glass of wine with his luncheon, and a beer breath could never be offensive to him. We had the beer, and as we sat there with eyes on the clock, the old cracked bell of St. Peter's wailed out the hour. How many times that bell had tolled to call the faithful and its now muffled sound plunged my imagination into avenues of devotional thought.

The colorful Swiss Guards admitted us into a palatial room and we took seats on benches which were placed on all four sides of the room. We waited in expectant and reverential silence, and watched various diplomats as they entered or left a small ante-room. The Pope's Guard announced his coming and signaled us to drop to our knees. There were about one hundred and fifty in that gathering and our kneeling down was not in idolatry, as bigots will tell you. It was court etiquette and the fitting obeisance to a spiritual king.

The late Pope Pious was a handsome man, well preserved for his years, aristocratic in bearing and benign in countenance. He wore cream white robes and suggested to me the thought of The Good Shepherd. He raised his hand in blessing on us and then passed among us extending his right hand. On this hand, he wore St. Peter's ring, symbolic of his office. Some pilgrims kissed the ring and some bent over it in reverence. His Holiness then went to the center of the room and again invoked God's blessing upon us. Marion, Elmer and I were deeply moved by the whole experience and the years have not lessened the memory of that edifying spectacle.

We visited the Vatican Palace, which aside from any religious association, is a treasure-house of Italian art. And to hurry through the Sistine Chapel, where Michelangelo's ceiling called for hours of contemplation, to dash through the Loggia of Raphael, and glance at the priceless library, seemed like lack of appreciation for the artistic feast at our hands. But the truth of the matter was that we were hurrying on for our scheduled sailing, and like hectic Americans, we were pressed for time.

St. Peter's is a miracle of beauty and one is completely bewildered on entering its vast interior. It is like three churches in one, the side aisles supported by enormous Corinthian columns. For the eye to encompass all the beauty in one short visit is as easy as trying to enjoy a three-ring circus. Everything calls you and you can only hope that your hungry eyes will not miss too much.

Facing the entrance above the main altar, is a canopy of bronze. A marble balustrade encircles an opening below, and dozens of golden lamps burn there, night and day. From the balustrade one looks down into the crypt and here lies the body of the simple Galilean fisherman to whom Christ once said "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church."

Gazing down upon that tomb, no real Christian regardless of his religious formulas, can leave that spot without a feeling of reverence for the man who believed in Christ and kept alive his message.

I remember crossing from one aisle to another, to view what I thought was a superb painting, only to find as I approached, that the masterpiece was a mosaic copy of that painting—so huge is the edifice. There are hundreds of these mosaics and some post cards which I bought in St. Peter's Square, told me that the larger ones had been twenty years in completion.

In the side aisles were sculptured tombs which held the bodies of former occupants of St. Peter's chair. One of the most imposing of these tombs is by Anthony Canova. Two huge lions guard the entrance to the crypt. All the tombs were compelling, magnificent, and electrifying, in their colossal beauty. Then we came upon a glorious sculpture of Anthony Canova's. The subject was "The Archangel" and the exquisite marble, like frozen moonlight, the symmetry of the body and the expressive study of the subject brought us to a standstill, physically and emotionally. We were exhausted with the thrills of the day and the appealing beauty of this statue made the cup run over, we could take no more.

As we walked from the Church, I had to unburden myself of a story which Elmer and Marion had not heard and which had come to me so forcibly as I looked at the Canova masterpiece. When I was about ten years old, and in the little classroom at St. John's Academy, we had what was called Readers, and I may have had the Third Reader. In these books were stories that early fired my

imagination, such as the avalanches which tumbled down and buried Swiss villages, the St. Bernard Dogs, Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata, and the Story of Anthony Canova. It seemed like yesterday that I read and re-read—

"Anthony Canova was a poor Italian boy and when he was about twelve years of age, he worked as scullery boy in the kitchen of a rich Duke. One day when the Duke was having a big dinner party, the cook was taken ill. The other servants were frightened because they had no center piece with which to decorate the table. Anthony Canova, who was washing the pots and pans said, 'If you give me a large block of butter, I will make something for the table.'

"He made a beautiful lion out of the butter and when the guests admired it, the Duke sent for the cook to thank him. Poor little Anthony, in his soiled apron and cap, was dragged into the beautiful room in the palace. When the Duke found that Anthony had made the lion, he ordered that he be taken from kitchen work and placed in an art school to study sculpture. He became a famous Italian sculptor"—so ended the little story.

In early girlhood, when I began to read about sculptors, I dreamed that I might some day see even a picture of Anthony Canova's work, the delightful story had so completely captivated my imagination. Small wonder then that I was especially moved when I came upon Canova's "Archangel."

We were loathe to leave the City of the Caesars, and returning on the *Vulcania*, we made plans to re-visit Rome and allow plenty of time for reconnoissance. Strangely enough neither Marion, Elmer nor myself have ever crossed to Europe again. And I feel no urge for Europe in these harrowing days, better that I keep the sweet memories of a past decade. The Europe of 1939 makes me sad for all countries involved, and particularly for Germany, and its inevitable Nemesis.

If Jesus Christ should again visit this Earth and go to Berlin and if Herr Hitler would consent to an interview, I think that Christ would say to him—

“Herr Hitler, you have done a great wrong to my people. I taught, and you learned it early, that ye love one another. It is the essence of the law of good living and the word of my Father. What demon possesses you, that you preach persecution instead of tolerance. Jew, Catholic and Protestant are all children of God and there must be charity for all and hatred for none. My apostles compiled a beautiful book called The New Testament, or Christian Bible. For many centuries, men have found solace within its simple pages. You discourage the use of that book, and murder and imprison the Catholic priests and Protestant Bishops who dare to preach its teachings. You force upon Christian Germany your own book “Mein Kampf,” destructive in its philosophy and conceived in hatred and greed. You will not succeed in trying to destroy my work. There is a simple law which says that truth and goodness outlive untruth and evil, and beauty lives forever. You have little time for beauty, in your hurried rise for power, you are too busy destroying Jews, punishing Catholics, and Protestants, grabbing new lands and training Hitler Youth.

“I said once, that I am the Good Shepherd who worries for the one lost sheep, and Germany makes me weep. Come back to the fold and bring your people with you—and before it is too late. Learn to love one another and the way will all be simple for you. God still loves Germany, he will forgive and save you from yourselves.”

And the Führer would probably reply,—

“That simple law of ‘Love one another,’ may have been all right with the dumbbells who lived twenty centuries ago, but it will not go today. When I was in prison, I was inspired, not by God of course, and my book is the only guide for the German people. I do not know why I bother to even talk to you, because

you are a Jew and I have sworn to annihilate them all, but perhaps you are the exception to the rule. We have had famous names among our German Jews,—scientists, writers, bankers and musicians. But we destroyed their work, took their money, killed off the unruly ones and their names will soon be forgotten. Of course I cannot take all the credit for this splendid work. My propaganda minister, Goebbels, has been most helpful. And now if you will excuse me I must put on my bullet-proof armor. I am going to parade before my beloved people.”

## XVI

### *LIGHT IN THE CLEARING*

**R**ETURNING to my hotel home, the fall of 1929 found me still marking time and with no real zest for life. Sweet friends pulled me out to theaters and concerts, and there was the comforting balm of good books, for leisure hours. But my whole existence was aimless. On my horizon, there was no beacon light to call me to a port of safety. My shattered nerves were again in rebellion and I was on the way to ill health.

I affiliated myself with the Polyclinic Hospital and worked one afternoon a week, at the desk in the clinic. And because I was placed at the desk, and made no personal contacts with the people who passed before me, I found the respite there uninteresting. My work was to stamp the clinic cards, direct patients to the proper doctor, as the case called, and stamp or issue new tickets for medicine.

And I had two experiences there which frightened my none too courageous soul, and added to my growing fears of disease.

One day a tall, gaunt, middle-aged woman, presented a card at my desk. The card was interesting in that it had been stamped at so many hospitals in different sections of the country. The woman apologized for having missed in regular visits. She was now working in an institution and for scrubbing the place, she received board and room. She was so busy, that it was impossible to get out on clinic days.

I asked her to wait, and took the card to the woman under whom I worked. This supervisor nearly had a fit when she saw

the card. "She is a famous typhoid carrier, known as Typhoid Jessie," said she. "Send her to me at once, and you go to the dressing room and scrub your hands with tincture of green soap." I so directed the poor weary soul, and proceeded to cleanse my hands. For one week I lived in dread of the disease, and every slight pain, ache, or indisposition threw me into an imagined fever.

On another occasion two women came in together. They were Italians, the older woman about forty-five, and the younger one in her twenties. The older woman passed me her card and I immediately knew, from the stamped number, that she was being treated for syphilis. I checked her card and the younger woman handed in her card. It was another syphilis case and both women bore the same names. I inquired if they were related and found that they were mother and daughter! The supervisor told me that it was a most pathetic case, the husband had infected his wife and daughter and again she bade me run for the tincture of green soap! I left the hospital ill that day and could eat no dinner that night.

My doctor warned me that I must give up the work, he said that I was unduly sympathetic and that work of this nature was better in the hands of less emotional beings. But I kept on until Christmas and helped with a big tree which we placed in the men's ward. When the tree was lighted, a little group sang Christmas Carols, each man received a present and it was a happy day. Some of the men took their presents with gracious thanks, some snarled and threw them to one side, and a couple of men cried—just another cross section of humanity.

And on Christmas Eve, I again rushed to Albany and my mother, and spent the holiday season in peace, if not gaiety.

I returned to New York to face 1930 and a nervous breakdown. My own doctor insisted that it was only tired nerves but I invested myself with all kinds of top-notch ailments—cancer, brain tumor, colitis and gall-bladder disorder. I wanted sympathy, and

attention, and was fast becoming neuresthenic. I demanded tests, X-ray pictures, sought expensive diagnosticians, had a deadly gall-bladder drainage and spent four days in a sanitarium, trying to be hopelessly ill.

The inevitable climax came one day, when I started downtown to attend a matinee. I took the bus on Fifth Avenue, intended to lunch alone, any old place, and meet a woman friend at the theater. As the bus jogged along, I began to feel faint, fear gripped me, and I told myself that I would undoubtedly collapse on the bus. There would be a scene, an ambulance would be summoned and unknown as I was, I would be dragged off to some hospital or possibly the morgue. The whole picture was so real and terrifying, that my heart began to pound, and I was gasping for breath. I left the bus at the street where my doctor had his office and started to walk the four blocks to his place. It was freezing cold and tiny snowflakes were whirling down from the leaden skies.

I managed two blocks of the short distance, and then sat down on the stone steps of an old house. I must have been a strange sight, smartly dressed, sitting on the old steps and staring into space. I saw both men and women glance back at me, after they had passed. I thought it heartless that no one said, "Are you ill, can I help you in any way?" But New Yorkers are wary and I suppose they must be. For I may have been a gun-moll, a white slave trafficker, or a narcotic addict for all they knew, and so I sat there alone.

Two doors below me was a famous speak-easy, then a rendezvous for some of my friends. I dragged myself into the little restaurant, sank in a chair and ordered a brandy, to be served at once. I gulped down the brandy and in a few minutes an alcoholic calm set in and circulation began to act normally.

Sitting almost opposite me was a former member of the Metropolitan Opera Company. She was lunching with an escort and

we exchanged greetings. Crossing over to my table, she said, "You don't look well; is anything the matter?"

I told her that I was thoroughly miserable and on the way to my doctor. I offered her my matinee seat which she accepted. She brought me over to her table and coaxed me into taking a few spoonfuls of hot soup. Later she walked with me to the doctor's and then departed for the theater.

It was about two o'clock in the afternoon and there were no patients in the office. I was unstrung and waxed melodramatic while the doctor calmly watched me.

"I am through this time, it is the end! I cannot fight any longer. Something is organically wrong, and I am willing to face it. Put me in a sanitarium or a hospital, I am not going back to that hotel. My affairs are in order and I am ready to die, but I cannot go on living like this."

Dr. Timm led me to an ante-room, took off my coat and hat and made me lie down on a couch. "I have been expecting this for some time," he said, "but it is not yet too late to save you." And standing over me he ranted, raved, and abused me as if I were a pickpocket! "You have everything," he said, "sufficient income, marvelous friends, talents, personable attractions and organic health. But damn it, you prefer to slump into neurasthenia. I have several neurasthenic patients and they contribute to my income. The world is full of them, but I am not going to let you join them if I can help it. You are like the old darkey who sings in *Show Boat*,—

"'I'm scared of livin' and feared of dyin'.' You are at the turn in the road. I am ready to help you, but you must work with me." Going to his library he reached for a doctor's book, marked some pages and placed the book in my hands. "Here," he said, "read the history of the neurasthenic, and re-read it. You will find all your symptoms in these pages and maybe your intelligence will help you to avert such a calamity. I shall look after my patients and

close this door. Sleep if you can, in any case you are not leaving this office for the present."

I read the horrible approach to neurasthenia, and its destructive after-math. I recognized my symptoms and could see myself taking a whirl on the merry-go-round of insanity. Surely I must not do this to my family, my friends and my doctor. They had all marched through my sorrow with me, and I must not let them down. But I too had been brave, I had tried to fill my life with travel, good books, social welfare work and even some music. What else was there to do?

I awakened in a dark room and turning on the light, I saw that it was five o'clock, I had slept about two hours! It was unbelievable and when the doctor opened the door, I apologized for sleeping in his rooms.

"It is wonderful," said Dr. Timm. "I opened this door twice, and you never even stirred. You are suffering from nervous exhaustion, and you relaxed because you felt secure here. It is the beginning of the cure, which will come slowly, but with your help, positively."

I arose to go, but Dr. Timm said that he had telephoned his fiancée Betty to join us at the office. We would all three go to a speak-easy, have a good stiff cocktail and I would eat a porter-house steak!

This was time for me to laugh. Cocktails I was afraid of and hotel food had killed my appetite—as for eating a porter-house steak, the idea was ludicrous. Too tired to argue, I went to dinner, had my cocktail and ate a goodly portion of the steak. I laughed a lot too, for Dr. Timm is a wit, a marvelous raconteur with a leaning for Rabelaisian humor. He and Betty brought me to my hotel, and as we sat there, he unfolded his plan for reconstructing my life.

"Today," he said, "while you were asleep, I telephoned to a

grand colored servant who happens to be out of work. She is the sister of my maid and a perfect cook. She will come to see you tomorrow and I want you to engage her."

"But why?" I said, "this hotel gives all kinds of perfect service. What will she do all day?"

"Well," said Dr. Timm, "it will work like this. She will arrive about eleven o'clock, prepare your lunch, sew, mend, answer the phone, and shop for and prepare you a home-cooked dinner. You must buy an electric grill and maybe a small electric fireless cooker. And I lose my bet if she does not soon become invaluable to you."

In March, 1930, Marie Porter walked into my life and is still today, my treasured friend and faithful servant. That she is a perfect cook and housekeeper is of importance but her understanding of life, her sweet philosophy, loyalty, affection and gentle manners have made her a comfort and blessing in my home. When Marie first came to me, and took me under her motherly care, I was afraid that she was "bossy," for she had her way in making me eat, rest, and even invite company for dinner. From a tiny serving pantry, in which she nearly suffocated, she brought forth miracles of southern cooking, to the wonder of my friends.

It was grand to open the door of my apartment and hear a cheery voice saying, "Did you have a nice walk," or "How was the concert today?" "Let me take off your shoes and put on your kimono. Now stretch yourself on the chaise and Marie will bring you a nice cup of tea!"

Or on other occasions she might say, "Well, my baby has had a tiresome day. Take off your clothes, Marie will bring your night-dress and beddy-jacket, you must have dinner on your tray tonight." And I, only too willing to be petted, would sit up in bed, like a lazy hound, and wait for the tray of perfectly cooked food. How that woman spoiled me and how I loved being spoiled!

May came, and with it spring was all over Central Park. I

found that I could look at Spring without the dull pain of the past two years, some of Nature's tonic was creeping into my heart. And although I was far from calm and perfect health, I felt the urge to live, and be well, and take my place in a new world where even happiness might be in the offing.

Dr. Timm suggested that I rent a house for the summer, near his country place in Darien, Connecticut. At first I rebelled at the thought, the country would be too lonesome. It was all right for week-ends, when you could dash back to town, but five or six months of quiet country life frightened me.

But Alec with his persuasive ways, drew a lovely picture for me. Every morning I was to don a bathing suit or shorts, and sit for an hour or two in the sun. This would iron out my tired nerves, and I would sleep like a baby. I was to make a garden, plant seeds, cultivate, pick weeds and use my hands in the earth—I, who thought of flowers as purchasable luxuries from the florist shop, and to whom the daisy and buttercup were the only simple varieties that I could correctly name. It seemed a silly plan, but I had trained myself to accept every idea which pointed toward health—at this time my only goal.

One day Betty and I drove out to Darien, and I rented a house simply because it had romantic appeal—defunct plumbing, non-flushing toilets, leaks in the roof, defective flues, and bugs underneath the plastered walls—these were thrown in with the romance. And still, I loved the place.

Money and competent workmen remedied the defects and no money could have bought the old charm which haunted the place. The house belonged to a famous American actress, Ann Sutherland and was a perfect expression of her artistic soul. Marjorie Rambeau, Henry Miller, Ruth Chatterton and Fiske O'Hara were only a few of the Broadway idols who once chatted around that fireplace.

The house was of gray stucco and almost completely covered with English ivy. It looked not unlike a small Italian villa. The grounds were now neglected, but had at one time been the pride of the West Norwalk Road. There were cherry trees and apple trees, honeysuckle in profusion, an old well, a formal garden and at the back of the property a lovely brook went gurgling on its way.

I could scarcely wait to move out there and Marie caught the spirit of my new thrill. We packed feverishly, for although the house was comfortably furnished, I moved books, lamps, sofa pillows and knick-knacks, to add to the general coziness.

We moved in on a May day when the rain fell in torrents, but nothing could dampen my spirits, for the new setting had given new hope for health and the future. I telephoned to a local store and had a flock of groceries sent in and a mechanic came to install my radio. With a good log fire, music and a Scotch and soda to bolster our spirits, Marie and I unpacked far into the night.

When I awoke the next morning, brilliant spring sunshine flooded the room and a new smell greeted my nostrils—the strange indefinable sweet smell of the earth after rain. And sounds new to my city ears, came through the open windows. Mating birds, whose names I was yet to learn, sent their beautiful wooing calls from tree to tree and a soft breeze played in the poplar trees which stood beside my window. The blessed peace of it all was a heavenly bromide and I was definitely going to like the country and possibly Darien. Of course, it was all part of the Great Weaver's plan, for Darien was to bring me health, a permanent home, a loving husband and happiness in the years that followed.

Dr. Timm and his wife lived within five minutes' drive of my house, Marion and Elmer had a new home in Silvermine, fifteen minutes away, and Geraldine Farrar, also gone country-minded, lived at Ridgefield, one half hour's distance. They all came to me,

for I had no car, and as yet was not strong enough to become involved in learning to master an automobile.

I made a daily schedule for my routine and kept to it faithfully. There was breakfast in bed, Marie's idea, then for two hours I sat in a beach chair, mostly naked, and invited the curing rays of old Dr. Sunshine. After lunch I worked in the garden, practiced on Ann Sutherland's old piano and had many leisure hours for reading.

On rainy days we sewed, neither Marie nor myself having any talent for the needle. But we maneuvered some decent looking fresh curtains for the house and had the impudence to make slip covers for the furniture! Under gay colored chintz, the old chairs and sofas creaked with surprise, but the effect was cheerful and I was busy with tasks that made for relaxed nerves.

There were neighborhood cocktail parties and I attended a few but shunned the cocktails. It was an abstemious period for me and John Barleycorn had temporarily lost one of his loyal devotees.

City folks came for quiet week-ends in the country, brought their noise and their liquor, disturbed the peaceful aura of the place, and marveled that I could endure such deadly isolation—it is only point of view. Upon my new horizon the countryside appeared as an open sesame to health and peace.

From my pitiful efforts in amateur gardening I learned with wonder, the miracles of growing things, and there became an attachment between myself and the good earth, which must now exist until the soil claims my body for future fertilization.

When I first opened a package of petunia seeds and gazed at little black specks, not unlike grains of pepper, it seemed ridiculous to expect a growing flower from each of these tiny dots. They were too small to handle individually. Even a slight wind would blow them from one's hand. But with grim determination, and on bended knees I dropped the little seeds into tiny trenches I had

made. With the instructions on the written page, I covered them lightly with earth, watered them ever so gently and waited for the revelation. Marigold seeds were equally disconcerting. They were like tiny flecks of dry straw and it seemed unbelievable that one of these drab and inanimate looking specks would take on plant life and bear the golden, gaudy marigold. Nasturtium seeds were easier to comprehend in that they were sizeable and could be properly spaced in the ground.

But in a short time under the careful supervision of Mother Earth, Father Sun and old Nurse Rain, hundreds of tiny green shoots poked their faces through the black soil and said, "Here we are, come for the summer, to make beauty for you. We are so many, that we are terribly crowded. You will have to move us later, transplanting it is called, so we can breathe freely. Pull out the weeds who would steal the nourishment from the earth and choke us. If the rain is busy elsewhere, and cannot get to us, you give us some water. When July comes, we promise that your garden will be a riot of color and we will bloom right on until Jack Frost strikes us down."

The gaily colored petunias, the gold and orange marigolds and the vivid nasturtiums were my special joy because I had planted them. The garden boasted many perennials, set out in former years, and with no small wonder I watched them return of their own accord, verbena, flox, delphinium and Canterbury Bells. They seemed to be like people to me, perhaps because I lived among them that summer. And their individual stems, leaves, colors, shapes and odors opened new channels of thought to one who had never grown a sunflower.

I had foolishly speculated and lost money in the Wall Street crash and when financial worries reared up like specters in the night, I thought of the peace and beauty in that garden and of the Parable of the Lily—

"They toil not, neither do they spin,  
But Solomon in all his glory  
Is not arrayed as one of these!"

And there was comfort in the thought that God would care for me, as He did for these flowers, if I trusted Him as they did and believed in His love.

The autumn came all too soon, and when the leaves made a soft brown rustling carpet and the trees put on their indescribably beautiful colors, I was loathe to leave the country and return to city pavements. But that summer had renewed my physical, mental and spiritual health to such extent that fear and uncertainty, demons of destruction that they are, were making place for hope and courage.

With Marie, for added security, I leased a pleasant housekeeping apartment, took my furniture out of storage and created a livable atmosphere that I called home. I passed a pleasant winter with my friends, attended concerts, opera, the Philharmonic and under Lauretta's expert guidance, I began to play bridge.

About this time, I made the acquaintance of the clever and amiable Sidney Lenz. He was then a reigning King in the bridge world and although I never reached the point where I could play bridge with him, I enjoyed his friendship. When he entertained, which he always did with easy grace, we would sit spellbound watching his magical card tricks.

How I had to eat my own words when I ventured into the bridge game. For I was one of those who decried all card games and loftily scorned the stupid folks who indulged in them!

How often had I attended dinner parties in homes where my hosts were bridge fiends. When the last morsel of food had slid past my esophagus the nervous hostess rose from her place and directed the bridge players into the living room where tables were set for the game. The non-bridgers, morons who had not yet

finessed into the bridge world, were sent to an ante-room, there to indulge their simple minds in poker, pinochle, hearts and lotto! Meanwhile the bridge intelligentsia unmasked for action. The jovial faces of the dinner table lapsed into expressions of Sphinx-like antagonism as in silence the little paste-boards were dealt around.

One dummy sits in quiescence, if she obeys rules, but I decided that it took four dummies to make the game a success. I watched four erstwhile friendly souls hurl sarcasm, ridicule, insults and sometimes blasphemy at each other's bids and plays and this puzzling procedure continued long after the ante-room guests had stealthily departed. Time and again, I had vowed that no one could lure me into this inane form of time-killing. But the year of 1930 found me feverishly studying rules and reading bridge books. Today I find the game fascinating and am a bridge addict, in the fullest sense.

My doctor friend advised that I shun all hospital work that winter and give myself entirely to a season of pleasant recreations, with no strain upon my sympathetic emotions. But social welfare work was then, and is at the present time, a magnet from which I cannot escape.

The winter of 1930-31, following the Wall Street crash, brought much misery and sorrow in its trail. But the greatest and most pitiful calamity took the form of unemployment for the working people. I had often seen bread lines on the old Bowery in earlier days and their personnel was usually confined to what is known as bums and derelicts. But this winter, there were numerous bread lines, wherein decent citizens took their places, because they were hungry. One saw them by day, and in the evening returning from the theater or the opera, there were endless bread lines where scantily dressed men and women shivered, as they waited turns for a cup of hot coffee.

Hoads of these unemployed marched in protest to the govern-

ment buildings in many of our important cities and a delegation of them marched to Washington. The situation I believe was without parallel in our country and was fraught with danger. For these indignant workers were demanding work and revolution seemed just around the corner. And when our government did release funds to create work for these masses, a howl went up from the financially secure—they were being over-taxed and their incomes lessened. In my opinion that relief did not come any too soon and only in time to stop a march which could have ended in our homes.

New York City, big and rich as it is, was a hot-bed of discontent and rancor. Purses were snatched from women's hands in broad daylight, pedestrians were stopped and money was demanded. Bricks were hurled at expensive limousines, and terrified women put away their jewels and expensive fur coats. Unemployment, with the resulting hunger and cold, was laying a fertile bed for class hatred.

One day, I happened to see an advertisement in a daily paper, asking for a woman volunteer worker to help in a soup kitchen. The reply was to be sent to a Protestant clergyman. I answered and was told to report to an address on East 29th Street. The address proved to be a lunch-room which had previously been a sizable store. A kindly faced minister greeted me and introduced me to the other workers.

There were several long board tables and benches in the room, and the seating capacity was for about eighty people. The minister's church had established a small fund, and every day but Sunday, free lunch was served to unemployed women. Soup had been taken from the menu, and hot coffee, cheese and ham sandwiches were the bill of fare. At one end of the room was a counter and behind the counter two huge coffee urns were kept filled. A young man, on small salary, made the coffee, washed the dishes and

cleaned the room. My work was to arrive at ten-thirty, on my day, and make sandwiches as fast as I could. At twelve o'clock there were stacks of them waiting for the hungry women. Two other women worked with me.

The bread was strictly fresh, the ham and cheese in thick slices, but there was no butter. Sugar, milk, salt, pepper, and mustard were placed on all the tables. The women who came there were domestic servants, laundresses, scrub-women and day workers who had canvassed the employment agencies in search of work.

For me, it was an illuminating experience, to watch these cold, hungry, disheartened women express their gratitude for the wholesome food and warm room. They came in droves, young and old, healthy and frail and without regard to race, creed or color. They were polite to the last one, and while some asked for the second cup of coffee, we had to force the second sandwich upon the timid ones. They came in all kinds of weather, and I have seen slush and snow clinging to their torn shoes. Always, there was the same story, the agencies had no work, but better times were coming. A delicate looking woman of about twenty-five, who appeared to be on the point of collapse, told me that she had walked from the Brooklyn Bridge. She did not like to beg, and a woman in one of the agencies, had told her of our free lunch room.

I gave no money to sustain the lunch room, my only contribution was my one day a week, and I was usually through about three o'clock. I never asked questions, nor tried to peer into private lives, but I did have an experience which was distressing, to say the least.

One day, it was bitter cold and snowing, a genteel and well-dressed woman came into the lunch-room. Her walk and general carriage bespoke refinement and she wore a nutria fur coat and a matching fur hat. She was like a rose in a garden of weeds, in that assemblage and I watched her.

She loosened her coat, sat at one of the tables and proceeded to stare into space. She did not come to the counter for food, and

when she had been there for some time, I crossed over to her and asked if she would like some coffee and sandwiches. Whereupon, she broke into tears and said, "This is awful. I have never been in a place like this in all my life. Three times I passed the door, not wanting to come in, but I am hungry. I have had nothing but a cup of tea for three days!"

I tried to comfort her and brought her some sandwiches and coffee. She drank the coffee but only picked at the sandwiches, remarking that they were delicious. The crowd had dwindled away and I sat with her, coaxing her to eat. And with no questioning on my part, she volunteered her story. She was an Englishwoman, her husband had been killed in the World War, and her three children were living in London, with her mother. There had been no work in England after the war, and she had come to America to support herself and her children. She had been employed as housekeeper in a wealthy Park Avenue establishment. Six servants were under her, and her employers had been kind and generous to the utmost—she was warm in their praise.

But they had been caught in the Wall Street crash and practically beggared. One by one, the servants had been discharged, a smaller apartment was taken, and only the cook and she, the housekeeper, were kept on.

Three weeks prior to this date, she had been discharged and during these three weeks she had visited every agency in New York in search of any kind of work. She told me that she was a good seamstress, could do secretarial work and act as governess. She was quite willing to do day's housework, but could not find any.

Having sent most of her salary to England, she had little money left when she was dismissed, and that had gone for room rent and meals. She bought a little Sterno, and made tea in her room. She had written to her mother in London, and was daily awaiting money to buy a sailing for home. She was about forty years old, with clear English complexion and fine features. Her hands were

expressive and lovely and her story completely unnerved me. I acted very stupidly in her case, perhaps that is why it remains so clear in my memory, and always with regret.

I am not given to being a tight-wad, but somehow it never occurred to me to offer her money. I told her that I would speak to the minister and the other workers and try to place her. I was even then thinking to engage her to sew for me, mostly to be able to feed her. So I told her to come the next day, to which she sadly agreed, but I did not take her name and address.

She never did return to that lunch-room and I had no way of locating her. She may have got back to London, or she may have jumped into the East Hiver; many did in those distressing times. I shall never know, but I shall always chastise myself for my neglect.

Before the winter snows had melted, my thoughts were turning to the country and I again rented the little house at Darien.

I wanted to move out in April, but well-meaning friends advised that April in the country can be very gloomy and depressing, with oft-times a snowfall. Now I know that each month of the year has its own charm and April with the return of the birds, the young green buds on the trees, brave crocuses for color and many balmy days, is indeed no exception. But I restrained myself and waited until May first, thereby missing Nature's grand opening show.

My doctor said that I must buy an automobile and learn to drive. The very idea of such a step frightened me. I contended that I was too high-strung and nervous to handle a car. But my arguments carried no weight—driving settled the nerves, and the orders were to buy a car.

I bought a roadster car from a neighborhood agency with the stipulation that I be given driving lessons.

After five lessons, I allowed that I would take my test. I passed with no errors and in a few days my license came from Hartford.

My pride in possessing that little ticket can only be realized by one who has experienced the same delight. I telephoned to friends to tell them the news. Every day I took the car out and cruised along the back roads and every night I had nightmares about the Boston Post Road, for I knew I had to drive there.

One morning I announced to my faithful Marie that this was the day, come what may. I backed out of my garage and knocked over some lovely geranium plants which were on a low wall. The crashing noise brought to my door a neighbor, who is now a friend. She suggested that she ride beside me on this initial and hazardous trip—she was a beautiful driver. I was glad for the moral support of her company and very carefully I eased the car on to the Boston Post Road.

I don't suppose there were twenty cars in sight, but it seemed to me like two hundred and I felt that they were all coming at me! Grinding the gears into place, I had gone but a short distance when the car began to buck and plunge and act like a wild bronco. We were both thrown forward and the car stood still. Traffic began to pile up behind me, horns tooted and screamed and I was the censure of many wrathful drivers. My humiliation was complete. I cursed and blasphemed and jerked at every part of the dashboard. Between her hysterical outbursts, my friend May told me that I had stalled the motor and had better start it again. I got it started, declaring that I would return the damn car the next day and buy a good one. I would never again suffer such embarrassment. Creeping along in second speed, I turned into a side road and stopped at the house of another friend.

"Let us get out and pay a little visit," I said.

"No," said May, "I'm not moving from here. My uncontrolled laughter has brought about a minor but humiliating accident. I have always had weak kidneys and when I laugh heartily, my tears, for some reason, find release through the butt-end. If it is all right by you, let us drive home and I can alleviate my discomfort!"

And that day we never did call on my friend.

But before the summer was over, I dashed up and down the Boston Post Road without a qualm. It was *some* traffic lane in those days; the Merritt Parkway was not yet in the picture.

That little car brought new pleasures into my life and the driving of it steadied my nerve centers and added to my feeling of security. With my Marie for the boon companion that she was and is, I traveled around the neighboring countryside, with always curious and admiring glances at other people's houses.

If I felt lonely, or low-spirited, in the evening, I went alone in my car, always returning before it was dark. In the dusk which followed a mellow sunset, I heard the birds singing their last good-night calls. Intoxicating odors arose from freshly watered gardens and there was a sweet stillness which I found ingratiating to mind and body. I returned from these little jaunts cleared of mental cobwebs, and ready for sleep.

One night, when the moon was full and a thousand memories arose to disturb me, I took my car and drove to a hill not far from the house. I parked my car at the highest point and looked at the moonlit waters of Long Island Sound. How many times Jay and I had slept in each other's arms when our boat lay at anchor in those moonlit waters. And there was that other moonlight night in the Alps when we rested on a moonlit glacier. I thought too of the unforgettable ocean moonlight, when Julien and I sat on the after-deck of the *Berengaria*. But there was no bitterness in my reminiscence; I was duly thankful for my negative happiness. I say negative, for my happiness was three-quarters peace and one-quarter loneliness—and loneliness can often make for peace.

August of 1931 found me chasing around the countryside with real estate agents. I wanted to buy a home. Nothing appealed to me. When a house had possible charm, the grounds were uninterest-

ing. When the grounds were charming, the house was prosaic or even ugly.

I was searching a piece of woodland, with a running stream and was told that finding it was like the old needle in a haystack. But the miracle happened and an agent found six acres of virgin woodland through which ran a sizeable brook, part of the Five Mile River, which in turn goes to Long Island Sound. The land was only three miles from where I had rented, but no road connected it with our main road, so few people knew of the spot.

And with Dr. Timm, his wife and my sister Madge who was visiting me, I explored the land where now stands my home. It was at noontime on a sunny day, but the woods were so thick and the undergrowth so heavy that only streaks of sunlight penetrated here and there. A thousand birds darted wildly about, when we invaded their sanctum and the happy, romping brook made soft music as it fell upon my ears.

It was like an enchanted forest and in ecstasy I burst forth into Longfellow's lovely words.

“By the shores of Gitche Gumee,  
By the shining Big-Sea-Water,  
Stood the wigwam of Nokomis,  
Daughter of the Moon, Nokomis.  
Dark behind it rose the forest,  
Rose the black and gloomy pine-trees,  
Rose the firs with cones upon them;  
Bright before it beat the water  
Beat the clear and sunny water,  
Beat the shining Big-Sea-Water.”

“If I should buy this land,” I said, “I am going to call it Gitche Gumee and I shall be the wrinkled old Nokomis.”

Perhaps I was being a bit facetious, but I keenly felt that the woods reeked with Indian lore and that Longfellow's lines had suddenly come to me for some good reason. After a short silence the real-estate agent said,

"It's funny that you should say that. Yesterday I was talking to Mr. S., a Connecticut farmer who lives up the road. He and his family have been here for four generations. Mr. S. told me that the former and only inhabitants of these woods were Indians—the last survivor was an old squaw and at the age of one hundred and two, she dragged herself out of these woods to a neighbor's house where she died of pneumonia."

One week from that date, another Indian, pale-faced this time, bought the land and a road to the main road was begun. Every week, with few exceptions, I came to Marion's house at Silvermine and we drove over to watch the progress in building. Trees were cleared for the site of the house and when the shovel came in to excavate for the cellar, I kept it for three more days and widened the brook into a delightful swimming hole. In summer, beach umbrellas and beach chairs lend gay coloring to the swimming hole and I call it my "Lido Venice!"

To buy a house in the country, or have one remodeled is one thing, but to build a house, fashioned from your own plans is quite another thrill. It's much like having your first baby, in planning, worry and suspense. There are no physical labor pains to be sure, but when bills payable to *labor* are presented, groans and moans are in order. For the estimated cost is half again as much as your budget allowed. Be that as it may, the joy of building my own home was a new and exciting experience, and I spent a happy winter in anticipation of the spring of 1932. I chose and paid for furniture, matched draperies and wall papers, gave myself presents of sets of books to help fill the new bookcases and chased around in a new delirium.

In March, when the ground was still covered with inches of icy snow, I was consulting a landscape gardener and planning for shrubbery and a garden. And speaking of gardens, tonight, over the air, Richard Crooks will sing, "Ah, Moon of my Delight," as

only he can sing it. The words are taken from the Rubaiyat and the perfect musical setting is by Liza Lehmann.

“Ah, Moon of my delight,  
That knows no wane.  
The moon of heaven is rising once again.  
How oft here, after rising, shall she look  
Through this same garden, after me in vain.”

When he sings these last two lines, I shall feel that old choking sensation in my throat and tears will fill my eyes. For I love my woods and garden and am loath to see them in other hands when I go to new green pastures. And if I ever find that Cosywood is tenanted by gross beings with insensitive souls, I shall haunt the place and terrorize them from these woods.

We, Marie and myself, moved to my new home in April. It wasn't like “April in Paris,” not the same kind of thrill, but a thrill it was and April in my own house, in my own woods was a grand second best.

The next month, in May, Geraldine Farrar and her beloved father visited me. “This is such a cosy wood,” said Geraldine. I had been searching for an appropriate name for the place and her remark seemed inspirational. I then and there named my place “Cosywood,” and that was neither the first nor the last inspiration which I have had from this Goddess of Song.

That first summer in my new abode, was a happy and busy one, with my own flower garden to set out and care for and finishing touches in decor for the house. I was my own decorator and to add to the fast developing rural urge I planned a vegetable garden. Trees were removed to make the garden patch, the ground was turned over and fertilizer mixed with the soil. I bought seeds and tomato and cabbage plants, and at twilight Marie, with some help from me, planted and cultivated the well-defined rows.

When summer week-end guests came from town, I expected them

to enthuse over my home-grown peas, string beans, just off the vine, or some degenerate looking ears of corn from my garden. I didn't have to resort to calculus in figuring out that my string beans were costing me about a dollar a pound, and the simple radish was averaging ten cents per bite! The city guests made appropriate and audible comments on the wonder of it all, and I know they also made mental reservations on the stupid extravagance of a small vegetable garden. But it pleased me much and I still have the garden. I have now reduced its overhead and upkeep to sane figures. Each Spring some stimulating manure nourishes the succulent greens, so necessary to the lazy intestine. And I have also ceased to count upon the approval of my urbane friends; they know not whereof they speak, and may be motivated by jealousy. In any case, they look with greedy eyes at my pantry shelves where chili-sauce, corn relish, chow-chow and green tomato pickle testify to some of the merits of the vegetable garden.

When October came, Nature took her paint-box and began to color my woods, and day by day I watched the green leaves take on their mellow autumn hues. There were browns, yellows, orange and also almost every hue of red. Each leaf seemed to be individually painted and the effect en masse was dazzlingly beautiful and dispelled any thought that the autumn period was a gloomy one. With an azure sky above, and the sunlight filtering through the mellow fringe, the woods looked like a gay Persian bazaar, and I was desolate at the thought of leaving it for New York.

As cities go, I love New York; it has been kind to me and its cosmopolitan face and magnificent pace have amazed me, since the day when I was eighteen years old and walked out of the Grand Central Station into its Babylonian chaos. I was then built for speed, as the automobile dealers say of a car, and comfort had no depth of meaning for healthy youth. In the winter of my years I have necessarily cut down on speed and comfort is now paramount.

In hotel rooms, city pavements, noise, afternoon teas, cocktail parties and city clothes, I found no fair exchange for rural peace, and the ever changing landscape of this New England country-side.

But a winter here alone with Marie, when summer residents had departed for New York, was another thought. It portended loneliness for both of us, and deciding against it, I returned to New York and took a furnished suite in an apartment hotel. Of course, the suite boasted of a fair-sized pantry, for I had no intention of dispensing with my capable Marie. This was a very extravagant arrangement, for I spent as much time in Darien, as I did in New York. Almost every week-end Marie and I, sometimes alone and sometimes accompanied by friends, came out to the country and went rural until Monday morning.

I had devised an agreeable plan for keeping the house open during that and subsequent winters. Angelo is an Italian laborer who does outdoor work for me and for my neighbors. He had helped in the building of my house and is a friend, in the best sense of the word. Angelo is a handsome specimen of manhood, and as honest as the sun. He is clean, in all ways, and when I offered him Marie's room and bath in exchange for caring for my house and my Irish terrier, Paddy, he was dumb with joy. He moved in guns, and pistols, and his two mongrel dogs, for whom he made twin beds, in the cellar. Paddy, by reason of class distinction, slept in the kitchen. Angelo watched the oil burner, always had a big log fire set and on one or two occasions, when I was expected, he surprised us by dusting the living room—much to Marie's distaste.

When the slightest snow-flurry appeared in the New York skies, I telephoned to kindred souls and invited them to a New England snowstorm. Lauretta, Rose or some equally amiable proselyte, made ready and with Marie in tow, we left for Darien. All night the silent snow would fall and in the morning my little picket fence had grown to huge proportions and every branch on every tree stood

out in white design against the winter sky. I loved these hurried excursions to Cosywood and before I knew it Spring was on its way and I moved back to Darien for the Summer of 1933.

I made the happy discovery that Orville Harrold, our great American tenor and a former fellow artist in Metropolitan days, was living in my immediate neighborhood. He and his charming wife, Blanche, were frequent visitors to Cosywood. Another neighbor was that brilliant wit, poet and raconteur, Charles Hanson Towne. We four spent many happy struggles around the bridge table, no one of us being an expert at the game. At one evening party, Orville Harrold, Mario Chamlee and Charles Towne told stories, acted and sang to the huge delight of my less talented friends.

Did Charles Towne sing, you ask. Oh, yes. He took from my wall a large and hand carved Rosary which I had brought from Italy. Mounting to my little balcony, he delivered himself of Nevin's "My Rosary" in the German tongue, with here and there an Italian lapse like "Sotto voce" and "Dolce far niente." The act was a riot of fun and he was always a hearty contribution to any party.

This same summer, Dr. Timm told me that some friends of his, a Mr. and Mrs. Thomas B. Clarke, Jr., of New York, had been looking at acreage which adjoined mine. I had met the Clarkes, found them charming and hoped that they would eventually become my neighbors.

At the close of summer Mr. Clarke purchased the land and in the autumn began to build what is now a very beautiful home. In order to facilitate supervision of the building plans, Mr. Clarke set up a sizeable log cabin in the woods and among other creature comforts, the cabin contained a big wood stove and a bar. Many week-ends, the Clarkes came up to this pied-à-terre and watched their home grow into loveliness.

One week-end, in March, 1934, Rose was here with me and on Sunday morning I sent Angelo to the cabin with a note, inviting Mr. and Mrs. Clarke for a noon-day cocktail. It was bitter cold and

a howling wind hurled the snow in every direction. After a short time, Angelo returned bringing a note from Mrs. Clarke and asking that we come to their cabin for cocktails, she had some other guests. Rose and I, dressed like Eskimos, and what with galoshes, sweaters, scarfs, fur coats and woolen berets, we were far removed from what the well-dressed woman was wearing. But we plodded through ice and snow to the little cabin, where a big wood stove threw copious heat and Mr. Clarke's brand of liquid fire made for winter hospitality. There were about six people sitting around the cozy fire, when the door opened letting in a terrific gust of wind, a snow flurry and Bill!

In my years of widowhood, well-meaning and conspiring women friends had said to me,

"Mary, you should not live alone, you must get yourself a husband. Why don't you go to the smartest shop in New York, buy a wardrobe that will 'knock them for a loop' and take a long cruise. On these cruises there are always a bevy of rich men, mostly old, of course. They are bachelors, widowers or divorced men, and they play bridge. It is a fertile field and will be 'easy pickins' for you. You will come back with a rich husband, it has been done before."

And my reply was that I would undertake no such manhunt. I was a fatalist, and if I was again to be married, I would meet the man at some unexpected turn in the road—maybe he was right in Darien, for all I knew. And there he was, standing in that little cabin, accepting the introduction with complete indifference, as I did, and in less than three years I married him!

He is best and easiest described in the words of the song from *Show Boat*, music by Jerome Kern and words by Oscar Hammerstein II.

"I used to dream that I would discover,  
The perfect lover some day,  
I knew I'd recognize him if ever he came round my way—  
I always used to fancy then

He'd be one of the God-like kind of men  
With a giant brain and a noble head,  
Like the heroes bold in the books I read;

But along came Bill, who's not the type at all,  
You'd meet him on the street and never notice him,  
His form and face, his manly grace  
Is not the kind that you  
Would find in a statue,  
And I can't explain, it's surely not his brain  
That makes me thrill!  
I love him because he's wonderful,  
Because he's just my Bill."

## XVII

### UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER

THE MIRACLE of Spring came again, as it always does, bringing a million hopes to the young, and a few to the old, who scarcely dare to hope. To me, the Spring of 1934 brought only the wish for continued health and peace, and now I know that that is a large order for the gods, whether one is young or old.

I returned to my rural nest in Darien and had less interest in this man "Bill" than I had for the weeds in last year's garden. But the Master Spinner was busy at His wheel and in the new tapestry for Darien, Bill and I were being woven into an interesting design.

The Clarkes were installed in their new home. Mrs. Clarke, an excellent bridge player, often summoned Bill and myself to "fill in," as it is called. Bill had not been living with his wife, I was a widow, so we were both good single prospects for the bridge hostess and we were inadvertently thrown together in successive bridge games. Bill, not particularly attractive as men go, was a beautiful player and I enjoyed being his partner. He had never heard nor read of Don Juan nor Casanova; his *modus operandi* was that of the faithful swain who languishes in silent adoration. And I, never averse to admiration, adulation and romance, flirted with this honest soul and shamelessly used my remaining charms in his direction.

Secure, in my own imaginary fortress, I thought that I could start a fire, fan it into a blaze, stand by and not even be scorched! But—to change the figure violently—the boomerang was in its first whirl, and I was later exquisitely trapped at my own game!

It was a beautiful summer and I saw a lot of Bill. When I had no definite engagement with him, he telephoned to see if he could bring me an evening paper, or perhaps take me to our neighborhood movie theater. He was like my shadow, and appeared at the most unexpected times and places.

My feeling for him at this time was one of sweet friendship, mingled with pity—always a dangerous combination. That pity was felt too by the residents of Darien who had known Bill when he traveled hand in hand with success. But at this period he had lost his grip on life and lived only in the sunshine of my presence. He had been forced to sell his seat on the New York Curb Exchange and the Wall Street panic of 1931 had ruined him. He was working at a small salary in a New York broker's office, just hanging on by his teeth.

One night that summer Marie and I had a first rate scare. It had been raining all day and was still drizzling when about ten o'clock Marie came into my room quivering with fright. "There are men in the woods," she said, "I see their lights and the dog is growling. They are burglars and if they come into the house, don't count on me because I am about to faint now."

I took my Irish terrier Paddy and started out the door, but Marie held me and begged me not to go; I would be shot without doubt. And being a bit of a coward myself, I lapsed into terror with her. We could see the flashlight moving in the woods, I opened the door and turned loose my faithful Paddy. He tore through the woods, howling like mad. His bark is an ugly sound, and means business.

Marie was actively ill at the stomach and my heart was trying to jump out of my body. I telephoned Angelo at his room in New Canaan, but he was not there. I called Bill at Darien and in ten minutes he came with two loaded revolvers.

Bill had spent three years at the famous King Cattle Ranch in Texas and William Tell had nothing on him for marksmanship.

He could shoot a curl from your head without disturbing the marcel wave—at least so I had heard. I begged him not to go down into the woods, but he fled past me like a streak of lightning and roamed and combed every part of the property. There was no one in sight, Paddy had probably scared off two harmless fishermen—my brook has always been a temptation for the followers of Isaac Walton.

Bill wanted to sleep on my porch all night, so that Marie and I could retire with peace of mind. But I dismissed him and compromised by keeping the loaded .38 beside my bed. Neither Marie nor I slept a wink that night, for the presence of the loaded revolver scared us as much as the thought of the burglars!

And in those waking hours a thought came to me which was more terrorizing than burglars, revolvers or major earthquakes. For I found myself saying, "Wouldn't it be lovely if Bill was really living here, he is so comfortable about the house, I would never be lonesome or frightened, I would always have an escort, and not feel like the fifth wheel on a wagon, and he is so companionable." I shook the thought from me and refused to accept that it was born of a deeper emotion.

Bill was in the throes of an inferiority complex, and had made no attempts at lovemaking. But I knew, and anyone with eyes knew, that he was a lovesick hound, and the grand passion was consuming him. If I felt the warmth of his fire, I denied it to myself and planned upon my return to New York that I would break up the friendship before it ripened into love.

That autumn I took an apartment at the Hotel Lombardy in New York and made deep-set plans to fade Bill out of the picture of my life. I did not invite him to call on me, which was cruelty to him and punishment for myself, for I missed him. But the many weekends that I spent at Darien, always found him on deck. He met my train and took me to the departing train. He brought flowers and books and candy and so much love that I was weakening under its intensity.

When I returned to Cosywood in the spring of 1935, our Connecticut musical circle had been further augmented by two Grand Opera Stars. Lily Pons had taken a French house at Silvermine and Lawrence Tibbett had a big place at Wilton. It was another lively summer, with parties or picnics, or formal Sunday gatherings at the homes of Farrar, Pons, Telva, Tibbett, Gilmour, Chamlee and Mellish.

From New York came Florence Easton, the late Arturo Bodanzky, Queena Mario, Jessica Dragonette, Norman Cordon, Helen Olheim, Charles Hackett, Genarro Papi, Richard Crooks, Martinelli and other singing birds who romped and played like happy children. Bill was now being included in these parties, in the role of escort for me, and he was completely enthralled with meeting the artists at play. For many of them are raconteurs without parallel, and their spontaneous wit, Bohemian conviviality and often superb singing, make of an evening a long remembered event.

Romance was in the air that summer and the sweetness of a new love hovered over Cosywood. I was thrilled at the sound of Bill's voice on the telephone. His nearing footsteps sent my pulses throbbing, his strong handclasp and devastating good night embrace were almost more than I could cope with. But I refused to be again ensnared by this thing called love and I put up a brave fight. I told myself that it was summer madness. The balmy nights at the beach when we watched the tide roll in, the moonlight in my woods, the hours we sat beside the laughing brook, and the sweet peace of the countryside—these things were all in league against me. They contrived to paint a picture of romantic love and I was really suffering from loneliness. I wanted Bill's attention and affection, but he wasn't really necessary to me. I would plan to rescue myself and run away, that would be very simple.

When autumn came and I was preparing to return to the city, Bill told me that he loved, adored and worshiped me. If he had a

million dollars he would place it in my lap, kneel at my feet and ask me to marry him.

His divorce proceedings were then on the calendar and I deemed it the auspicious time to declare myself. So I told Bill that I was deeply attached to him, but not in love. I expected to remain a widow and would never marry again. And, furthermore, I was going to put three thousand miles between us, for I was leaving for California. A four or five months separation would deaden the heart throbs, sharpen the head work and bring us both to our senses—we were acting like young lovers and probably worrying our close friends.

Bill accepted my ultimatum with outward calm but with a little choke in his voice he said that my going to California or even to China could never make a difference in his heart—he would live on adoring the very thought of me. That was a grand line; I loved the sound of it and I wonder that I didn't wilt under it. But escape was the paramount thought that I held and I remained firm in my decision.

In December I got a reservation for Marie and me. When I told her that we were departing for the sunshine of California, she almost went to pieces. She declared that she couldn't eat nor sleep until we entrained, she was afraid that I might change my mind.

Marie loves travel, has a keen appreciation for beauty and an enviable sense of the artistic. She has a grand wit, makes the perfect audience for me, in my clowning moments and has spoiled me beyond all hope of recovery.

My friend, Orville Harrold, had passed on and his widow Blanche was living in Hollywood. She secured a furnished apartment for us in the same building where she lived. I was completely charmed with beautiful California and I was really seeing it for the first time. When I visited there in 1921, I was a member of the Scotti Opera Company and what with rehearsals and per-

formances and more rehearsals, I was always on call and had no leisure for side-excursions. But now I had allowed myself four months in which to indulge in the beauty of Southern California. Under the spell of this beauty, I could forget Bill and close off all thought lines which led to him and to Darien.

If Californians brag about their State, and they do, I, for one, can subscribe to their pride in it. I know no small corner of earth where Nature has so lavishly set up her scenic effects. There is the tropical verdure of Florida, snow-capped mountains, the blue Pacific rolling over white sanded beaches, and hills, ravines, canyons and a desert to boot. The soft low hills are covered with wild flowers, the desert is a compelling sanctum and the tree-life is something to confuse the layman and send him on a hunt for his botany manual.

I saw in close proximity royal, coconut, sago and date palms, camphor trees, pepper trees, olive trees, walnut trees, orange, lemon, fig and eucalyptus trees. Geraniums grew in a bush-like formation, attained luxuriant blooms and were often used as hedges! When I first saw these hedges I exclaimed over the lovely rose bushes only to discover that these handsome flowers were a larger edition of the skinny geranium plants in my window box.

Mary Howard Gilmour and I spent a week at Santa Barbara, and the friends with whom we visited drove us about the surrounding country and to the old Spanish Missions. Within these picturesque Catholic shrines I said prayers for myself and for Bill, who was breaking me down with his burning love letters. Although I am not a regular member of any Church, I have always believed in prayer. But over a period of years, my formula for prayers has undergone an interesting change.

As a girl, I made special proscribed prayers to favorite Saints and to the Blessed Virgin, God seemed further away, and I scarcely ever talked directly to him. I did not hesitate to ask for material needs,

such as a new dress or high marks in my Regent's examinations.

Now I pray directly to God and send up only thanks for the manifold blessings which have come my way. If I am not too tired, I usually add "God Bless Bill" and "God Bless Marie."

Blanche Harrold is a skillful driver and in her car we made trips to Santa Monica, San Diego, Pasadena, Coronado, Tia Juana and took a week-end at dreamy Ensenada on the Mexican coast.

We left Hollywood at nine o'clock one Saturday morning and in brilliant California sunshine. After an early luncheon, our route took us into the mountainous country and we zigzagged down into fertile valleys and climbed up colorful cliffs, with here and there a passing view of the Pacific. And then, for a long time, our road lay along a steep cliff, which overlooked the sea.

Blanche is a friend with whom one can enjoy silence, and while she kept her eyes on the perilous road, I gazed in rapture at the blue expanse of ocean and the cloudless blue sky. The mountains, the sky and the ocean seemed to have no beginning nor end. They just stretched on. And the vastness of it all was an eloquent reminder of the finite and infinite. And I gave myself a lecture on my own unimportance along these lines:—Long after your mortal remains are pushing up the daisies, these mountains will stand in majesty, this blue canopy of sky will inspire new generations and the sea will break into spray on the rocks below. One of those little grains of sand which now reflect the sunshine, that will be here too, it has more of permanency in it than you have.

"Blanche," I said, "this is indeed inspirational. I feel as if I was listening to beautiful music, perhaps a great symphony. Of course, there is music all around us, but my mortal ears can't pick it up."

"If it is not too late," said Blanche, "we might hear some of the Opera performance from New York."

She tuned in on the radio and we caught the last strains of *Norma*, coming from the Metropolitan Opera House. And it was

strange that the opera should just happen to be *Norma*, for that great opera was so replete with memories. I could see the old forest of the Druids, the primeval forest of Evangeline recollections; I could hear the glorious singing of Telva, and Ponselle, and I could feel the presence of Jay, for *Norma* was the last Opera we had heard together. And here was I, driving along a cliff which overlooked the Pacific and in the twinkling of an eye the beautiful music had annihilated time and space. The West became the East, the present the past, and I could only hope to direct my own life, so that the future strains of my symphony would vibrate without discord.

We arrived at Ensenada about five o'clock in the afternoon and drove through tropical gardens to the big hotel, a long rambling building of Spanish architecture.

In the lobby, reception halls and huge lounge, were priceless paintings, rare Spanish relics and furniture which could compete with museum pieces. Handsome wrought-iron gates hung in places where doors might have been and I felt transported to the palatial home of an old Spanish Grandee.

Our sleeping rooms faced the ocean, an extravagant measure for each of us, but today in the light of reduced income, surplus taxes and the always possible sheriff, I am glad that I succumbed to that extravagance. While I bathed and dressed for dinner, I watched the sun dip below the horizon and the sea rolled in, resplendent in her evening dress of orange, purple and red.

We descended to the de luxe bar for our cocktail and from the dining room I could hear the fascinating rhythm of the sensual Spanish music. "I am allergic to this atmosphere," I said to Blanche, "and the enchantment of the place is gripping me. The American men we see here are the common garden variety, but these Mexican and Spanish men are male orchids. The porters, bell-boys, waiters and bartenders are far too handsome for their posts. No

doubt they are handpicked by the management with deliberate intent to stimulate the lone female traveler—just an old Spanish custom, I suppose.”

As we were draining our delicious Bacardi cocktail, there came into the bar room one of our public enemies to womanly decency—the old woman with the young man lover.

She was an American and bedecked with diamonds, I should think about sixty-five years of age. She was freshly painted like an old barn, her hair was dyed strawberry red and her figure thin to the point of emaciation. She wobbled on her high-spiked heels and you sensed that her feet were bad. If all things were right, and they never are, the old dame should have been at home in a comfortable rocking-chair, telling fairy tales to her great grand-children.

The man was a Mexican gigolo about twenty-seven years old, handsome to a degree, with huge dark eyes, teeth that looked like plates in the dentist's window, wavy black hair, which suggested the marcel iron, and a tall graceful body which undulated on restless snake-like hips. He was a law unto himself.

We were seated at a table and they stood at the bar quite close to our table. We were not the only on-lookers who watched these two, for their very appearance had caused a stir in the room.

Mrs. Hag-tail, we shall call her, argued for a drink and the new light in her life refused to order one for her. He took a drink himself and told her that she had had enough,—she was silly now! Tears came into her tired eyes as she coaxed and pleaded for another drink. He lowered his voice and gave her a first-rate scolding. She whimpered and again begged for just one more.

The Mexican ignored her, ordered another drink for himself, and turning his back to her, he disdainfully sipped his drink and took a careful inventory of the other guests. He then sauntered to the gentlemen's room. Mrs. Hag-tail seized her opportunity and ordered a Scotch and soda. She looked so weary and beaten that I

wanted to push a chair her way and say, "Sit down old dear, while you can—it won't be long now."

The Mexican returned, saw the drink and went into a blind rage. His handsome face became distorted, the big black eyes narrowed into slits, he clenched his hands and hissed like a serpent. With one sweep of his arm, he knocked the glass and its contents behind the bar and said to his cowering mistress—"If you utter one word, I will slap your face"—and believe you me, that poor little face of hers couldn't stand a good slap, only her bridge-work bolstered it. What price love!

Blanche and I had seen enough of this pitiful spectacle and we drifted into the dining room where the glorious music and the fascinating Mexican dancers dispelled all thought of the lamentable bar episode—we reveled in the music, the night and the joy of living.

After dinner we lounged in big comfortable chairs in the gardens. Old Father Neptune had been beguiled by her Ladyship, the Moon, and the sea seemed hypnotized by the shimmering silver moonlight. A faint perfume rode along on a timid breeze and we were enveloped in the exquisite spell of a lovely summer's night. Now and then the insinuating strains of the seductive Mexican music broke the stillness, pulling me further and further into the pool of enchantment that is Ensenada.

"Blanche," I said, "I am traveling down the wrong alley if I am really trying to forget Bill. I should have betaken myself to a nunnery and not to this alluring atmosphere. Everything about the place screams romance and love, and I am running away from both. Ever since I came to California, I have been fighting, but the odds are all against me and I miss Bill more than I can tell you."

"Well," said Blanche, "you are not asking me, but I am telling you that I think you are a darn fool! You are running away from what

most people are trying to capture. I have lived alone for only three years and I hate every minute of it. You have a chance to go down the years with a man who adores you. Orville and I knew Bill, years before you met him, and I think he's grand."

"But I am not sure that it is love, Blanche."

"Well, I am. Your entire conversation is punctuated with thoughts of Bill. You are like a silly school-girl over his letters and when he telephones you from New York, you are not sane for hours after. If you don't call that being lovesick, I don't know the name for it. You came to California with the avowed intention of remaining for four months. You are here six weeks, and talk of returning very shortly. You say that you want to see the spring in Darien, but I say that there is little spring there in March. You want to see Bill, and why not be honest with yourself and with him?"

And laughingly, but grudgingly, I subscribed to these statements because I knew them to be true. Love was again tuning up the long-muted strings of my heart and I was in sweet accord with its vibrations.

That night, when I went to my room, I sat for a long time at the open window and looked out on the moonlit Pacific. The scene was one of compelling beauty and I wanted to share this night and its beauty with Bill.

Two lines of a poem kept running through my mind.

"For what can smite like beauty  
That is not shared by love?"  
(Jessie Rittenhouse)

And I heard in that summer silence, the voice of Nature, the voice of God, and the voice of Love. Then the three voices sang in trio and the content of their song seemed to say,

God is all love, love is all God and Nature  
is the manifestation.

There was nothing entirely new in this thought, but somehow it came to me that night in most forceful accents. Perhaps I had attained sufficient mental and spiritual growth to be receptive to the music of the spheres. In any case, I liked the theme, and when Nature and Love beckoned to me and God whispered that it would be good to follow the call, I surrendered to the love delirium, and was happy in it.

The next day I wrote from Ensenada and told Bill that I was returning East in about ten days—I wanted to greet the early spring in Connecticut—that's what I wrote on paper.

Poor Marie nearly had spasms when I announced that our Hollywood sojourn was at an end. She had gone California completely, and was mad about the place. And she mumbled and grumbled as she packed our trunks. "March in the East was a disagreeable month," so she said. "It was cold and dreary, with rain, snow and sleet. How could anyone with common sense leave this heavenly spot for the drab New England country." She intimated that there was another reason for my sudden return, but I chose to ignore her insinuations.

And again, donning my rose-colored glasses, I made a most attractive picture of an unattractive man. He is very tall, I told myself, about six feet two, a grand height. I really hate short men. He has great wide shoulders, narrow hips and no façade where his belly should be; really a graceful figure.

His skin smells so fresh and clean, perhaps it is because he is an out-of-doors man—then, too, his teeth are all his own, that helps too. He has lovely hair, tons of it, and although he is well over fifty, there isn't a trace of gray hair. When he crushes me in those long, strong arms of his, I just quiver with joy. And surely, those thick sensual lips give promise of further love delights to the woman of his choice. I have experimented with his kisses and know that Bill and I are chemically attracted, and that too is important in the

summing up. I guess "he's my man" all right, and I may as well turn my steps to the East and poke my head into matrimony. It's a gamble, of course, but so is life and if I jump from the frying-pan into the fire, well, that's all right too. I am sick to death of living in the frying-pan, a touch of real fire might do me a world of good!

I wrote Bill again, telling him that I would arrive in New York on an early morning train. He was not to come in to meet me, I was going directly to my sister's for breakfast, and to Darien later in the day.

When I stepped into the Grand Central Station, there stood Bill, smiling like a Cheshire Cat and carrying a corsage of gardenias. His welcoming kiss almost knocked my teeth out and when he wrapped me in his arms, I felt secure and I knew that Love and I had come home to stay.

It was good to be back at Cosywood and if March, 1937, was cold and bleak and drab, I knew little about it. Eternal Spring was in my heart and I was wallowing in the delicious quicksands of a new love. New love is sweeter than old wine and more intoxicating. Under its potent spell, I lived through a summer rhapsody and in October, 1937, Bill and I were married.

### MEMORIES

My mother passed on to another life about five years ago, at the age of seventy-four. And although I had not lived in Albany for over thirty years, I had always returned to her every Christmas, but one. That year Mr. Gatti Cazazza was distracted by the many illnesses in the Opera Company and refused to allow me even one day's absence. Jay and I had Christmas dinner with friends in New York. It was an elaborate meal and they did everything to cheer me but that holiday was a failure.

In the Christmas week of 1937, the Yuletide memories began to

surge with old time yearnings and I could no longer subdue the desire to have an old fashioned Christmas party.

My home in the country expresses I think, all that it's name "Cosywood" implies. The house has a duplex studio living room, with a huge fireplace and there are two grand pianos in opposite corners. The windows all look upon a lovely woods and I thought that if I could arrange a snowstorm for the night of the party, nothing would be lacking.

I sent out thirty-two invitations and received thirty-four acceptances, one couple had to include two guests. My cards read,

"Christmas Tree  
Christmas Carols,  
Christmas Cheer  
December 23—6 to 8 O'clock  
R.S.V.P."

My faithful Marie, Bill and myself, shopped and decorated to the point of exhaustion. The balcony and fireplace were draped in laurel, there were bunches of holly and mistletoe in every suitable place and a holly wreath with a huge bow, in every one of my eighteen windows. The Christmas tree was indeed a picture, with the little stable of Bethlehem beneath it. In the stable and around it, there were Mary, and Joseph, The Child in the Manger, and the ass and oxen. And standing about were shepherds, angels and The Three Wise Men, bringing gifts.

I had written from memory the old Christmas Carols and an obliging neighbor had typed about ten copies. I planned that my guests would stand in little friendly groups, and each group would sing from one copy.

Two o'clock that day found me pretty nearly exhausted—I had worked so hard and no more ideas nor energy left. If I could have lifted a good stiff Martini cocktail or bent the elbow to a scotch and soda, it would have helped considerably, but it was not to be that

kind of a party, so I must needs carry on without the helpful stimulus. The gods were with me and at five-thirty I had a marvelous pick up in the shape of a sizable snowstorm! It seemed too good to be true, many things are, but there it was, spreading a clean white carpet and adding the only Christmas touch which could make the picture complete.

My friends said that the thrill and Christmas cheer began when they turned into my woods and saw through the snow, my house brilliantly lighted and holly wreathes in every window.

My country friends are like myself, gay and mostly sophisticated—with here and there one who is blasé or suffering from ennui. And it was no easy task to begin a Christmas party with carols and hymns! To compromise, I announced that *one* drink would be passed, so that we might lift the glass to a Merry Christmas and then proceed with the singing. Believe it or not, my husband and I did not partake of the Christmas drinks, and that in itself smacks of the miraculous.

I played the accompaniments and the singers began rather timidly. Then the volume of sound grew and those with and without voices caught the spirit of it all and sang lustily. We repeated some of the carols, "Onward, Christian Soldiers" was suggested and not badly conducted by a Wall Street broker who had become feverishly enthusiastic. We closed the musical festivities with the "Doxology," more than one person was affected, and by emotion only. It made me happy to hear that these good folks had not enjoyed that kind of a Christmas since they were children.

When the cocktails and hors d'oeuvres were being consumed, I arranged a little surprise. There appeared on the balcony a grand old, fat-bellied Santa Claus, in full regalia. He was my same obliging neighbor, Tommy Clarke, and he announced that his reindeer were waiting outside and he must hurry on to the other children. He wished us all a Merry Christmas and said he would give a

present to each good child. At this point, one very sweet soul said, "My dear, I hope this is all, because I am crying; inside. It reminds me of our old-fashioned Christmas time at home when I was a child, and I just cannot stand much more!"

Santa Claus gave each one a little present and passed some pertinent remarks with reference to this man's golf, that woman's twins, this man's drinking capacity and that woman's charitable work. The remarks were clever and received with acclaim.

Practically every maid, in the various households had a telephone call that night with instructions to postpone dinner indefinitely, and the last departing guest left about nine-thirty.

By this time the snow had completely covered the ground and the trees in the woods had taken on new and beautiful outlines. We turned on the outside lights which are placed on the grounds and my elated guests drove home through the snowstorm, properly imbued with the real Christmas spirit. The comments on the Christmas party seemed more lavish than I could bear, but I know that they were genuine, and I was very happy. That Christmas Carol party put me on the spot. My Darien friends decided that in the gay round of holiday festivities, my party was unique and must become an institution. I was elected to carry on and the party was repeated in 1938 and 1939. This year, I had several advance telephone calls, as to the date of the party. No one would chance being booked for another engagement.

It is two years since my marriage and the sweet delirium still prevails. My rose-colored glasses are now a permanent fixture and I see Bill only with the eyes of my heart. At times I look through the white lenses of reason in search for Bill's imperfections. But somehow the rosy glow from within obscures my vision, and his weak points are minimized or obliterated. I see in high relief his love, courage, devotion and many another estimable quality which continue to endear him.

The eminent Chinese scholar, Lin Yutang, says that an American professor in addressing his freshman class, told them to bear in mind these two suggestions,—“Read the Bible and keep your bowels open.”

I heard of another professor who was addressing a graduating class of male students. In his closing remarks, he told the young men to be wary of the sex-act; it was vastly over-rated and for three reasons: “First, the pleasure is momentary—second, the price is costly,—third, the position is ridiculous.” The advice of these two pedants is worthy and deserves consideration. I unhappily have foundered many times in an endeavor to follow these admirable warnings. If I should address a girl’s graduating class, I should like to say to them—Young ladies, I have here the usual cut and dried address to read to you. I have prepared it carefully and there are complimentary, flowery phrases and high-falutin words. But as I look at you, so young and fresh, each of you clutching her prized diploma, I have decided to put aside the written address and talk to you.

When I was eighteen and a half years, I had two diplomas, all kinds of high ideals and a head crammed with book learning. My education was a well rounded one and I stood upon a solid religious background. But when I stepped out into the battle of life, and it is a battle if one lives fully, I found myself in a strange labyrinth called the world. In that world I met people, places and situations more complex and fantastic than any which had existed in books. As I look back over the years, I know that only two words carried me through, and I pass them on to you—Love and Courage. They are like the red and white corpuscles in your blood stream, so closely must they travel together and so much do you have need for them.

And do not confuse sex-love with love. Sex-love is but one small expression of the great emotion. Love God, people, children,

flowers, music, dogs and birds. I do not suggest fish nor squawking parrots, but if they make a special appeal to you, include them in the overflow. Harness Courage to your Love and with this powerful team you can out-ride the petty horsemen on your path and arrive at your chosen field.

Of course, there will be thorns and brambles and pitfalls along your course. But with Love to light the way and Courage to sustain you, it will be an interesting journey, with beauty at every by-path and understanding at the end of the road.

Once when I visited England and Ireland in May, it was very cold and foggy. At the Mayfair Hotel in London and the Shelbourne in Ireland I spent much time in telephoning the office for a scuttle of coal! My friend Rose quietly watched me tend the fire, turn over the big pieces of coal and nurse a little heat into our damp rooms. One day she said to me, "Dear, you are reverting to type—after all you are Irish and you seem entirely happy with a pick and shovel." That remark gave me a good laugh and something to think about.

And today a strange thing happens, I am again reverting to deep-seated urges—Bill and I have been in Bermuda only four days and the spell of its quiet, quaint beauty is upon me. Yesterday, we took a carriage and drove to Hamilton to have cocktails with old friends. We passed a Catholic Church, St. Theresa, Of the Little Flower, and on the hill back of the church was a convent. Some nuns in white habits were sitting on the balcony, in complete repose, and the Bermuda sunset threw a soft rosy glow about them. I said a quiet prayer, I often do, and at the same time had a crazy idea—I have many of those too. I thought I should like to give up our charming rooms at the hotel and go to live with the nuns for a few days. It is called making a retreat and many Catholics and non-Catholics often avail themselves of

this period of rest and contemplation. After all there is not a great difference between a convent and a lamasery—and one does not have to cross the Lost Horizon and land in Tibet to find spiritual sustenance.

Well, I did not move into the convent, but after our cocktail party, we went on for dinner. We drove across the island and on our return the road followed the sea. There was a full moon, and other than the quiet ocean roll, and the clop, clop of the horses on the pavements, there was no sound. It was profoundly beautiful and we found ourselves acting like the typical Bermuda honeymooners.

This morning I awoke early and my first thought was that I must see that convent again and possibly talk with the nuns. So my dear non-Catholic husband ordered the carriage and off we went to the Church of the Little Flower. It was open, because there is a holy day on August 15th.

It seems that the boat from the United States had not arrived in time to bring gladioli and asters. And the docile nun who admitted us was distressed because of the meager floral display. I thought the simple flowers quite lovely.

I lingered awhile in the chapel and said The Lord's Prayer, which to me really sums up the whole story, and happens to be the only prayer I remember.

It was sweet to turn back the pages and again see myself at the chapel organ, which I had so often played for services. And in the choir loft, I could see Sister Baptista and some of my classmates, one of whom is now a nun. An aura of peace was all about the place, and in the few moments I spent there, I thought of the distance I had traveled from the little organ in the incense smelling chapel, to the glittering footlights of the Metropolitan Opera Company. And I wondered that if I had entered the convent as Sister Mary Ursula, would I have been any happier. My

life with its high-lights and shadows, its hills and valleys, for, I seldom kept to the middle of the road, has been a full one and with no complaint.

I could not resist to tell the dear little Sister that I had gone on to the Opera, was there for several seasons, and later sang in concert and light opera. She seemed pleased, and interested, and asked me to sign the guest book.

Imagine my surprise when at the top of the page was signed Sister Mary Ursula, the name of a visiting nun from Pennsylvania. I remarked the strangeness of it all and signed in the next vacant place, under the signature of Shirley Temple. This sparkling little artist had recently visited the convent.

In that short visit to the convent, I gathered some pious fragrance for my bouquet of living and I told myself that Cosywood in Darien would be my future Shangri-La.

## XVIII

### HOME

I AM practically snow-bound and as I sit before a log fire, I am looking into a winter fairyland. My woods are breath-taking in their white grandeur. It is January of 1940. The big casement window frames an etching in black and white, and Nature is the artist. No master etcher could even capture the intricate lacy delicacy of this winter scene. I think it was Madame de Stael who once said that "architecture is frozen music." And today, the Master Architect has portrayed a Woodland Symphony in these woods.

On some big trees near the house, we have hung little wire cages which hold suet—winter rations for our winter birds. Now and then a touch of life comes into the still picture—a fat, gaudy blue-jay perches on the suet cage and a patch of vivid blue appears on the etching.

My Irish terrier Paddy is stretched full length on a rug before the fire. He is a companionable rascal and his gentle snoring adds a note of harmony to the general coziness. At times he opens his eyes, to see if all is well with me. If he could talk, I think that he would say "Je suis content"—it is such an expressive statement. Translated into American slang, it would mean, "Everything is all right by me!"

The beautiful Tschaichovsky Fourth is coming in softly over the radio and the Philharmonic Orchestra under Barbirolli is giving a lovely sympathetic reading of that noble work.

Thoughts are running through my mind, when I want to rest and indulge in the music. If I should never again hear Tschaichovsky, if the orchestrations of *De Meistersinger*, *Tristan* and *Louise*

would never again delight my ears—if St. Moritz, Cannes, Lake Como, even Ensenada were closed pages of beauty and there was only a future at Darien, Connecticut, that would be all in order and as it should be. For my eyes and ears have had a fair quota of beauty and with profound gratitude, I acknowledge that I am deeply thankful for the aesthetic sense. And that the winter of my years should place me in this friendly woods, which speaks and sings of beauty, seems more than I deserve.

Let who will belittle the radio and decry the canned music of the victrola. I find them blessed contributions to our education and entertainment. The privilege of hearing music when one is alone, can never be over-estimated, for only at such times can the composer, the interpreter and the listener become truly one.

Concert halls and opera auditoriums must of necessity have their incidental distractions. But to curl up in a comfortable chair and let the radio bring your favorite symphony or to set your concert on the Capeheart, perhaps a Chopin Ballade, a Rachmaninoff Prelude and some vocal gems, is a musical treat of no mean order.

When a layman says to me, "Of course I do not understand music, but I love it. I go to concerts and opera at every possible opportunity and I have many Victrola records of the famous artists."

I can only say to that person, "But you do belong to Musical Unity and the cycle would be incomplete without you." The creator of music can put his thoughts on paper, but it is for the interpretive artist to bring them to life and pass on the message. This message can be heard only by the sensitive and responsive soul whose ears have been lovingly attuned.

If Mr. A. is in heaven listening to a Brahms' Symphony and Mr. B. finds exultation in a Rachmaninoff Prelude, while Mr. C. rises to dizzy heights when Benny Goodman plays the clarinet, it is only because the cycle has been again completed. Composer, interpreter and listener are in harmonious vibration.

Of course we all have our regrets, and if I have one, it is that I shall not live long enough to read all that is beautiful in literature. And the years will dull my hearing, long before I shall have heard enough of the beautiful in music.

I regret too that I could not have walked and talked with favorite authors and composers who have so richly contributed to my happiness. It is true, that other than admiration and adulation, I should have little to offer in exchange for such precious moments. But I love to dream that my imaginary friendships were real ones.

If I could only have known George Sand well enough to have asked her permission to sit in a corner and hear Chopin practice—especially when he was working out the *Ballade in A flat*.

If I could have known George Moore, about the time that he was writing *Heloise and Abelard*. Maybe he and I would have had a little dinner together in the Touraine country, and over a bottle of Vouvray, we would have discussed Balzac's country—and perhaps love, as George Moore understood it.

It would have been sweet too, to sit around the fire in the old Reine Pédaque with Anatole France, caustic and ribald that he was. I have had such sweet visionary friendships through my books and music. Surely the treasured classics, which have come from the pens of Shakespeare and Richard Wagner bear eloquent truth to the words of the poet Keats "A thing of beauty is a joy forever."

It is five o'clock, it has been snowing all day, and King Winter is painting one of his most beautiful scenes. From my windows I see azalea, laurel and rhododendron bushes which look like cotton plants with their full white blooms. Hundreds of black tree trunks rise from the white earth and stand like sentinels under their snow covered branches. The picket fence, the rose-arbor and the old gate are fantastic in contour and seem to groan under their dazzling burdens.

The great stillness of falling snow is all over the place, and only the crackling of my fire logs disturb the winter peace.

Through this still, white scene, another landscape forces its way to my mind's eye. I see blood and frozen bodies on the white fields of Finland. How ghastly it all is and how grateful I am to be an American—at this, or any other time!

It is quite dark now, and still snowing, I see friendly lights at a distance, my neighbors' homes beyond the woods. Soon Bill will be driving in and I am watching for his car as he turns from the main road. His face will be cold when he kisses me, but the kiss will be warm and sweet. He will walk to the fire and warm his strong hands.

"How is my darling today, and would she like a little cocktail before dinner?"

"Yes, angel, your darling would like a cocktail and not too little!"

Then my blessed Marie will serve us one of her excellent dinners—maybe left-overs, she is a marvel along that line.

And after dinner I shall provide entertainment with my new Christmas present—a Radio Victrola machine which plays twelve records in automatic succession—no more jumping up to change each record.

My special joy tonight will be the records given to me this Christmas by Marion Telva, and made by Marion Telva and Geraldine Farrar. Marion sings and Geraldine accompanies her and the records are perfection in performance and recording. And while we three old friends commune through our music, Bill will lie on the couch, gazing into the fire and loving every minute of it. When Marion sings Grieg's "Ich Liebe Dich," Bill and I will exchange tender glances and in my heart will be the lovely lines of Robert Browning,

"Morning's at seven,  
All's right with the world."







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